

The New Criterion

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

Aaron Copland's world *by Samuel Lipman, 1*

Margaret Mitchell in the Soviet Union
by Boris Paramonov, 7

Cézanne's watercolors *by Sidney Geist, 14*

Distorting Melville *by Peter Shaw, 23*

New poems *by Henri Coulette, Carol Rumens,
Michael Blumenthal, & Jane Kenyon, 34*

Art: The minimal and the magical *by Eric Gibson, 42*; A forgotten Golden Age *by E. V. Thaw, 46*; **Theater:** Making Whoopi *by Mimi Kramer, 49*

Books: Peter Ackroyd T. S. Eliot: a life *reviewed by Bruce Bawer, 55*;
Anatol Goldberg Ilya Ehrenburg *reviewed by Robert Conquest, 62*; Philip Young Hawthorne's secret: an un-told tale *reviewed by James W. Tuttleton, 66*;

Notebook: On collecting *by Jed Perl, 72*; Steinway on the block *by Samuel Lipman, 75*; Who's afraid of Tom Wolfe? *by Robert Richman, 78*;

Letters: Noam Chomsky & Geoffrey Sampson: an exchange, 81

Volume 3, Number 5 January 1985

\$3.50

"SALMAGUNDI has been the liveliest, most original,
and most adventurous critical quarterly in this country
for many years."
--Joseph Frank, 1984

Salmagundi

Winter 1985, issue #66

a special feature on

"HILTON KRAMER & THE NEO- CONSERVATIVE CRITIQUE OF CULTURE"

also in 1985

MILAN KUNDERA, interview, new fiction, an essay

GEORGE STEINER, Our Homeland, The Text

FRANK KERMODE, Reviewing Modernism

OCTAVIO PAZ, Remembering The Past

CHRISTOPHER LASCH, The Progressivist Intellectual

SUSAN SONTAG, Feminists

CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN, Kissinger

other articles by William Gass, Denis Donoghue,
Carlos Fuentes, Jacques Barzun, Erich Heller, etc.



#66 alone: \$5.00

Five-issue subscription (#66-70): \$10.00

Send name & address with check to:

SALMAGUNDI/Dept. NC
Skidmore College
Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866

Daniel Galliduanì

Noumenal Mirrors

January 10—February 16

Dorothea Rockburne

New Paintings and Drawings

February 23—March 30

XAVIER FOURCADE INC.

36 East 75th Street New York, New York 10021 212 535-3980



Hans Hofmann: Major Paintings 1954-1965 will be exhibited from January 5 through 26 at the André Emmerich Gallery at 41 East 57th Street, New York. Shown above is *Rising Sun*, 1958, oil on canvas, 60" x 72" (1.52 x 1.82 m.). A fully illustrated catalogue with 13 color plates is available at \$15 postpaid.

The New Criterion *January 1985*

Editor *Hilton Kramer*

Publisher *Samuel Lipman*

Managing Editor *Erich Eichman*

Assistant Managing Editor *Eva Szent-Miklosy*

Poetry Editor *Robert Richman*

Office Manager *Colleen Babington*

Contributors to this issue

Bruce Bawer's essay on the stories of Guy Davenport appeared last month in *The New Criterion*.

Michael Blumenthal's books of poems are *Sympathetic Magic*, *Days We Would Rather Know*, and *Laps*.

Jane Bobko's translation of an interview with Sergei Dovlatov just appeared in *The Threepenny Review*.

Robert Conquest, author of *The Great Terror*, is a Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Henri Coulette teaches at California State University in Los Angeles.

Sidney Geist, a writer and sculptor, is the author of several books on Brancusi.

Eric Gibson reviews current exhibitions for *The New Criterion*.

Jane Kenyon's poetry has appeared in *Poetry* and *The New Yorker*.

Mimi Kramer is the regular theater critic for *The New Criterion*.

Samuel Lipman is the music critic for *Commentary* and the author of *The House of Music* (Godine).

Boris Paramonov taught the history of philosophy at Leningrad University. In 1977 he was forced to emigrate to the West. He now writes for the Russian Service of the BBC and Radio Liberty.

Jed Perl's article on Van Gogh appeared last month in *The New Criterion*.

Robert Richman has written for *Commentary* and *The American Scholar*.

Carol Rumens's new book of poems, *Direct Dialling*, will be brought out by Chatto & Windus.

Peter Shaw is visiting professor of English at the University of Virginia.

E. V. Thaw is an art dealer and the co-author of *Jackson Pollock: A Catalogue Raisonné*.

James W. Tuttleton teaches American literature at New York University.

The New Criterion is published monthly except July and August by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc., 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. Publication Number ISSN 0734-0222.

January 1985, Volume 3, Number 5. Subscription rates: \$27 for one year, \$50 for two. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send changes of address to 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. Copyright © 1985 by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc. Distributed in England by Periodicals in Particular, 1 Prince of Wales Passage, 117 Hampstead Road, London, NW1. Editorial/business correspondence should be addressed to The New Criterion, 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. (212) 247-6980. Notice of nonreceipt of an issue must be sent to the Office Manager within three months of its date.

Advertising representative: Kate Shanley, 521 Fifth Ave., NY 10175. (212) 729-6221; (718) 757-6454.

The New Criterion is designed by Alvin and James Eisenman and printed by the Eastern Press of New Haven, Connecticut.

**important
sculpture
and ceramics**

miró

mason

marini

butler

ipousteguy

giacometti

**pierre
matisse
gallery**

41 east 57 street
new york city
through january

Copland's world

by Samuel Lipman

Once again the world of American music is celebrating Aaron Copland. In part, I suppose, all the attention now being given to the recent publication of the first volume of the composer's memoirs¹ comes about because music lovers seem to have so little else to celebrate. And yet to begin on such a rueful note is to ignore a simple fact: Copland is cherished as a serious composer because his music is loved by a serious audience which wants to hear many of his pieces over and over again. There are some, doubtless intellectuals educated beyond their intelligence, who will maintain that the same can be said of Frank Sinatra and other artifacts of our public culture. We ought to allow them their opinion—on the condition that they confine their attentions to those possibly attractive amusements which they, and most assuredly not we, truly love.

For those of us who, for better or worse, are stuck with (to use a term hardly popular these days) "classical" music, Aaron Copland has written a music of force and beauty which fascinates both musicians and laymen, which is often popular in appeal but always rich in musical and emotional resonance, and, most important, which occupies a special place in our national aural psyche as the way in which Americans hear themselves. And he is now eighty-four, an age at which

he surely can look back on his career in music and find it good.

The life of a composer is in his music. Nothing which one reads in a book can alter the magnitude of an artist's achievement; in this respect autobiography, biography, and music criticism are all in the same leaky boat: words wither, but the music goes on—or doesn't, as the case may be. So it is in vain that we look in *Copland: 1900 through 1942* for any real insight into his music, or, for that matter, into the music of his many colleagues, colleagues whom he befriended and publicized.

But it is, after all, not *musical* insight which Copland's book is about. These memoirs are the best account we have had of the creative milieu out of which a viable American music can—and has—come. Now, when the prospects of serious music—not just of composition but even of performance—look ever bleaker as the funding hype waxes more eloquent, the social recollections of so major a figure as Copland provide an account of when art music was in the American mainstream, when it was part of the highest civilization, rather than taking part in an avant-garde *blague* or a world of plaster performing idols cherished for their spurious geniality.

Copland's creative milieu extended to the world in which he was born. Until the present book, he had always made his origins out to be a cultural and musical desert: indeed, his words about having been born

1 *Copland: 1900 through 1942*, by Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis; St. Martin's Press, 402 pages, \$24.95.

"on a street in Brooklyn that can only be described as drab . . . [where] no one ever talked music to me or took me to a concert . . . [and] music as an art was a discovery I made all by myself" have gone into American intellectual mythology as a proof of our national boorishness. The reality was instead that music—good music by any standards—was all around Copland as he grew up. His brother and sister could give a passable violin-and-piano performance of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto; such an effort, viewed as a family accomplishment, now seems the height of elitist stuffiness. In addition, his sister took singing lessons at the Metropolitan Opera School. By his own testimony, he had gone with his mother to hear John McCormack at the old Hippodrome and Jascha Heifetz at Carnegie Hall; later, while still in his teens, he heard Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony in Sunday afternoon concerts, and the Boston Symphony, who in those days "came to Brooklyn on Friday nights for a series of five concerts each year."

There were excellent teachers, too, to nourish the young Copland. His favorite piano teacher was the eminent Clarence Adler, a student of the great virtuoso Leopold Godowsky (himself an American resident since the outbreak of World War I); his composition teacher until his departure for France in 1921 was Rubin Goldmark, (a student in piano of the famous pianist Rafael Joseffy and of no less than the great composer Dvořák). Though Copland himself—horror of horrors—didn't go either to music school or to college, his closest friends were Aaron Schaffer, then studying French and French literature at Johns Hopkins, and his own distant relative Harold Clurman, then a student at Columbia and on his way to the Sorbonne. Nor should the influence of Copland's intensely Jewish background—suppressed by the composer until his decision to make the fascinating material contained in the present book available—be underestimated: reverence for learning and culture, the desire to see one's children rise in the world, and the particularly close rela-

tionship between Jews and music since the nineteenth century combined to make Copland and an entire generation of Jewish children attempt, many of them successfully, to become classical musicians of the first rank.

In France during the 1920s, Copland came face to face with Old World culture. Here was not just Nadia Boulanger, the teacher of Copland as of so many successful young American composers. Here was the still living Ravel and Saint Saëns, Diaghilev and the Russian Ballet, Stravinsky and the young *Les Six*, French food and wine, Paris and the countryside. Close by, in Germany and Austria there was a quite different kind of music from the French; here Arnold Schoenberg was lighting the torch of the twelve-tone system. But important as old Europe was in Copland's musical and cultural formation, at least as important were the relationships he made there with fellow American musicians of his own generation, among them Roger Sessions and Virgil Thomson. These relationships were to become important, even before the 1920s were over, in his development as a composer of not just music, but *American* music. Strangely enough, Copland (though he found France enchanting) was not beguiled into becoming an expatriate; like Sessions, he had to return to his homeland to flower as an artist. Indeed, his epistolary thoughts about home, even allowing for what he calls "not wanting the folks . . . to think I was getting too fancy," strike an authentic note of the pull back to the states:

Don't think I've forgotten Washington Ave. [the street in Brooklyn where Copland was born]. I shall certainly think of you all eating those enormous dinners on Roshhashona and groan at the thought of missing the marvelous cakes after the fasting is over on Yom-kippur . . .

Back at home, there was a receptive musical environment awaiting the aspiring composer. Serge Koussevitsky, the Russian-born, French-anointed conductor of the Boston

Symphony, offered Copland (at the behest of Boulanger) performances of a still-to-be-written *Organ Symphony*. The work, with Boulanger as soloist, was performed by both Koussevitsky in Boston and the already venerable Walter Damrosch in New York. Though Copland's symphony was more successful in Boston than in New York, what counted was not box office or even critical acclaim: the times were now ready to accept a native American classical music as worthy of serious attention.

It cannot be said that these moments of discovery of American music and composers were achieved without substantial efforts from famous musicians. Indeed, Koussevitsky was at this moment the chief force making for a proper appreciation of our native music. Hard as it is for us to appreciate, with our present plague of circuit-riding conductors from here, there, and everywhere (but never resident in the cities where they conduct and prosper), Koussevitsky made the Boston Symphony his life. Copland's memoirs make clear that this dedication didn't just mean the endless polishing of this week's hackneyed chestnuts; it meant Koussevitsky giving his full attention and commitment to the new music he had chosen:

... if he liked a work, he liked it wholeheartedly, and that meant a performance by the BSO, every young composer's dream.

... Whatever the piece, no matter how the orchestra felt about it, Koussevitsky would demand the same attention as for a recognized masterpiece. He would say to the orchestra, "The next Beethoven vill from Colorado come!" He felt responsible, as musical leader of the community, for convincing both orchestra and public of the value of the new music which he accepted for performance.

Koussevitsky's programs in Boston were planned so that the major portion of rehearsal time could be devoted to a new work, and when he invited composers to rehearsals, usually Thursday mornings, the orchestra members were on special guard—they knew the Maestro would be particularly demanding. He had the kind of authority over his men that no

longer exists in American orchestras. One likes to think that it was his enthusiasm for the music that caught on to the players, but if not, his hold on them was so secure that we as composers felt supported by the entire BSO as well as its conductor. It is not by chance that during the twenty-five years of Koussevitsky's leadership, from 1924 to 1949, American symphonic music came of age.

As a composer, Copland was hardly content to push only his own music. As a writer about contemporary music, he early became a frequent contributor to Minna Lederman's invaluable quarterly *Modern Music*.² In the pages of this magazine, which was published from 1924 to 1946, he provided a calm, dispassionate, encouraging—though not uncritical—voice embracing the current scene. He was an entrepreneur too, collaborating with the musically very different Roger Sessions (though doing most of the work himself) on the Copland-Sessions concerts in New York from 1928 to 1931. These concerts provided a showcase for new music not just for musicians and the press, but also for a new class of patrons, including among them Alma Morgenthau Wertheim, the backers of the MacDowell Colony, and the Guggenheim Foundation. It was, all in all, a time when, in the words of *The New Grove Dictionary*'s article on Copland, "advanced New Yorkers [and, one might add, most sophisticated Americans interested in art] were hoping to outdo Diaghilev's Paris."

Though Copland's path-breaking *Piano Variations* of 1930 had propelled him to a kind of leadership of younger American composers, one vital element was still lacking to make his adjustment to his native environment complete. Interesting and important as the *Piano Variations* were, they were also hard, acerbic, and laconic; they spoke out of the compositional world of Arnold

2 A fascinating history of this brave venture, written by Minna Lederman, has just been published by the Institute for Studies in American Music at Brooklyn College under the title *The Life and Death of a Small Magazine*.

Schoenberg to a limited audience of cognoscenti. What was needed to fulfill Copland's career instincts were the large numbers of listeners which for a musician in a democratic society are the surest sign of success. Copland found the large audience he was seeking in a return to folk music less intellectually sublimated than the jazz he had mined in his early work. Now, in *El Salón México* (1936), he used folk tunes in the style of a Mexico City dance hall he had visited. Soon he returned to local American material itself, writing *Billy the Kid* (1938), *Rodeo* (1942), and *Appalachian Spring* (1944), all three ballets for the new serious American dance associated with Lincoln Kirstein and Agnes De Mille. In these enduring works he used such Americana as "Come wrangle yer bronco" and "'Tis the gift to be simple." He wrote movie music too, beginning with the scores for *Of Mice and Men* (1939) and *Our Town* (1940). And he even wrote, difficult as it is for us to understand in these days of ardently cultivated artistic alienation, *patriotic* music: the audiences, lasting until the present day, for the *Lincoln Portrait* and the *Fanfare for the Common Man* (both from 1942) are numerous and enthusiastic.

What can explain Copland's breakout, starting in the mid-1930s, from coterie composer to an American musical hero? Doubtless his ability to find a popular audience was always a part of his artistic talent. But for an artist, talent, though necessary, is never sufficient: the times must be right. The 1930s, economically a time of depression, of hunger and suffering, were nonetheless the seedtime of midcentury American power and prosperity. Recovery at home and participation in the world order made up our ambitious national agenda. It was a time of expansion in America's idea of how it saw itself, of a public vision of the nation as great *in* the world, not *apart* from it.

Nowhere was this development more marked than in art. The founding of museums—not least of them the Museum of

Modern Art in 1929—and symphony orchestras all across the country was a symptom not just of a new awareness but of a new audience. Already at the beginning of the Depression, the American Communist Party had been quick to hold before artists' hungry mouths the appealing vision of a utopian society in which "workers by brain" would be more equal than anyone else. Copland soon became caught up in the endless round of consciousness-raising activities. Though never as involved in the movement as his friends composer Marc Blitzstein and playwright Clifford Odets, Copland became a "sympathetic" (the term used in the present memoirs by Copland's collaborator, Vivian Perlis) attendee at the Composers Collective, a group formed under the auspices of the Party-controlled Pierre Degeyter Club, a branch of the Workers Music League, which itself was under the discipline of "the Communist-backed International Music Bureau." Here the aims were, according to Blitzstein (the group's secretary), the writing of music ranging from mass songs "dealing with immediate social issues" to instrumental works carrying on "the best musical traditions of the past, now threatened by the collapse of bourgeois culture." Copland even had one of his songs published in material prepared by the Collective, along with songs by such undoubted Party types as Charles Seeger, Elie Siegmeister, Earl Robinson, and Hanns Eisler. And he reviewed some of this material, collected under the title *Workers Song Book No. 1*, in the Communist Party organ the *New Masses*,³ calling it "the first adequate collection of revolutionary songs for American workers."

As the 1930s wore on, the Communist Party, responding to the new policies of its Soviet masters, was quick to introduce the Trojan Horse of the Popular Front as a means of harnessing the new homegrown

3 Interestingly, though Copland's writing for the *New Masses* is mentioned by Perlis in the body of the present book, the publication's name is omitted from the work's index.

creativity. Now an artist such as Copland was freed of any possible imperative that he submit to the dogmatic requirements of Party ideology; all that counted was that someone sympathetic to the Party might find a mass market for his artistic wares. Now the publicity apparatus of the Left was put at the service of Americanism, and except for the short period of the Hitler-Stalin rapprochement between 1939 and 1941, American artists were all together in the fight against the Nazis. Whatever the motives of the different players in the game, the atmosphere of patriotic consensus was good for the creation of a salable musical art, and Copland was the chief beneficiary of the era of good feeling. He delivered, and in delivering created, much of the music for which he today is justly being celebrated.

Perhaps the most interesting pages of the whole book of memoirs are those devoted to Copland's experiences after 1939, when he shared with Paul Hindemith the responsibilities of teaching composition at the newly established Berkshire Music Center of the Boston Symphony. Here was the unlikely conjunction of the very Jewish and very American Copland, himself at least partially a product of French influence, and the very, very German Paul Hindemith, perhaps the closest approximation to the immortal Johann Sebastian Bach we are likely to have in this century. The encounter was hardly without its frictions, but under the gentle guidance of the polyglot Koussevitsky it worked, and the student rosters of Copland and Hindemith read today like a who's who of American music.

World War II was not a wonderful time for writing serious music. Composers were either unavailable for composition at all or at best were tempted into the easy accents of unbuttoned patriotism. When peace came, it brought with it in music a desire to emulate European trends. American composers, instead of returning home and continuing their development of an American music, became outriders on the train first of European serialism and then of technological experimentation. Brought home and en-

shrined in the American academy, the result was a new music at once arid and footless, and eminently forgettable.

So massive was the failure of our native music in this period that the negative attitude toward it on the part of both performances and a sophisticated audience managed to extend itself to the earlier, and vastly more hopeful, production of the 1930s. Now that music too—except for the few spectacular pieces of Copland—seems under a kind of ban, with major works of such remarkable composers as Sessions, Walter Piston, and Roy Harris unheard in the concert hall and even largely unrecorded. Until recently it had seemed that this situation was irreversible, and that an American classical music, for all of Copland's heroic efforts, might once again have to start *ab ovo*.

But now, relatively suddenly, we seem to find ourselves in a new America, not just politically and socially, but culturally and perhaps even musically as well. There are plans afoot to record all the symphonies of Walter Piston and William Schuman in integral versions, played by American orchestras. The New York City Opera is talking of reviving distinguished American operas which managed to get written in the 1950s despite the surrounding academic desert. And serious composers like Ned Rorem and Hugo Weisgall, who managed to preserve their musical integrity and consistency despite the pressure around them to be bores and buffoons, are still writing valuable music; that music is being heard not just with respect but with something which appears very much like affection. Mention must be made too of the extraordinary new career of the veteran composer George Perle, who will be celebrating his seventieth birthday this spring. Renowned as the greatest living Alban Berg scholar, he had always been a composer; now his recent works, for example the beautifully crafted and immediately appealing *Serenade III*, as performed by pianist Richard Goode and conductor Gerard Schwarz in New York last spring, are suggesting that we may well have a new old master in our midst.

And so Aaron Copland's most recent memoirs may well have come along at just the right time. They speak to us of a world full of fresh creativity, of interesting people doing interesting things, of the living connection of new music to significant movements in culture and society. Invaluable as it is for us to learn about our ne-

glected past in order to build a viable future, we still must remember that the past is there only as a teacher, not as a model to be slavishly imitated. What we can now learn from the life of Aaron Copland is that it once was possible to write music; with good will and hard work it doubtless is now possible to do so again.

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion*:

Glass's "Einstein" *by Samuel Lipman*

A new Berio-Calvino opera comes to Salzburg

by Dana Mack

Allen Ginsberg's Collected Poems *by Bruce Bawer*

A catalogue raisonné for Arthur Dove

by Hilton Kramer

Susan Cheever & the sins of the father

by Roger Kimball

New poems *by Donald Justice, Herbert Morris,*

& Leslie Norris

Margaret Mitchell in the Soviet Union

by Boris Paramonov

translated by Jane Bobko

In 1982 a Russian translation of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* was issued in the Soviet Union. Judging by reports from that quarter, the book has been an enormous success—with those readers who have got hold of a copy. That the book has appeared in Russian only recently is not surprising. In the world of centrally planned Soviet publishing, forty-six years is not that long an interval—there is to this day, for example, no Russian edition of *Ulysses*, although a translation of it exists and was even published in magazine excerpts in the Thirties. What is cause for wonder is that Mitchell's book was published in the Soviet Union at all.

But wonder gives way to other emotions when one learns from the colophon that the book has been printed in an edition of ten thousand copies. Ten thousand is next to nothing by Soviet standards. Moreover, this negligible print run has been given to a book that is by its very nature meant for popular consumption. Mitchell's admirers claim that her book is an American *War and Peace*, while her detractors think of the novel as a run-of-the-mill soap opera, a phenomenon of mass culture. Whoever is right, Mitchell's characters have the air of archetypes and as such are destined to have the widest popular appeal.

In this light the figure ten thousand takes on a specifically Soviet meaning. It suggests that there was a battle over the release of *Gone with the Wind*, and that the final publi-

cation figures signify a compromise. On some grounds the decision was made to publish the book, but in such a way as to keep it from reaching many Soviet readers. The book will be accorded "special distribution" in the bookstalls at Party conferences, and a considerable portion of the edition will be sold abroad, to bring in foreign currency. (I myself bought the book at a bookstore in Rockville, Maryland.) All of which is why a friend writes to me from the Soviet Union: "It's *for you* that they're publishing Margaret Mitchell."

This same friend says: "We've had it with the Yankees, we're switching to the Southern side." His comment touches on a circumstance that makes the publication of *Gone with the Wind* in the Soviet Union so remarkable. It is difficult to imagine a book about the Russian civil war, written from the Whites' point of view, appearing in the Soviet Union today, and yet the allusions and associations in Mitchell's book lend themselves to precisely such an interpretation for the Russian reader. It may be objected that a book of this sort has already been written and published in the Soviet Union, and its author crowned with all possible laurels—*And Quiet Flows the Don*. But, as the Soviet saying has it, that was long ago and not true anyway. There is still some question whether Mikhail Sholokhov is the book's actual author. More important, the action of *And Quiet Flows the Don* concludes with the end of the civil war. There is no sequel that de-

scribes "the triumph of the victors." Indeed, nearly all description (and certainly all glorification) of Soviet life after the Revolution has come from the victors themselves.

There is one other element that lends significance to the Soviet publication of *Gone with the Wind*. The preface to the book was written by Pyotr Palievsky, a rather well-known Soviet literary scholar who specializes in English literature. Palievsky is known in the Soviet Union less as a literary scholar, however, than as the unofficial leader—together with another literary critic, Vadim Kozhinov—of the so-called neo-Slavophile movement. Given Soviet conditions, just the existence of this movement is something of a sensation.

In czarist Russia, Slavophilism was an ideological movement parallel to European romanticism (the American approximation would be Henry Thoreau). It drew up a blueprint for what would now be called a counterculture, one that met certain vague criteria of wholeness and profound spirituality or religiosity. In the Slavophiles' estimation, Russia was a nation that had from primordial times harbored an instinct for a long-awaited "whole" culture. The pronouncements of the Slavophiles, therefore, took on if not nationalistic then in any event anti-Western overtones. B. M. Eikhenbaum, the Soviet literary scholar, considered Tolstoy to be Slavophilism's greatest genius, although Tolstoy never actually numbered among the Slavophiles' theoreticians and ideologues. In the middle of the last century the rivalry between Slavophiles and Westernizers was all but the most important event in the world of ideas in Russia.

In the Soviet period, since roughly the 1960s, an undercover, virtually underground restoration of Slavophile ideas has been underway. This movement has surfaced in literature, in the so-called "country prose" that Solzhenitsyn believes to be Russia's classical literature of the twentieth century and the major manifestation of a Russian cultural renaissance. Palievsky and Kozhinov are considered—or would like to consider themselves—the theoreticians of this move-

ment. Naturally, under Soviet censorship, neo-Slavophile ideas cannot be openly expressed. In such circumstances it is necessary to resort to the Aesopian language in which Russian readers are extremely fluent. Palievsky's preface to *Gone with the Wind* is one example of it. The simple fact that the American book is set before its Soviet public by a neo-Slavophile suggests that in spirit this book is part of the Russian revival, that it has something significant to say to today's Russian reader—something that could not be said otherwise. Mitchell's book becomes a landmark along the path of a *Russian* movement.

So what is it that makes *Gone with the Wind* an event in Russian life? There is first the depiction of civil war—an experience that Americans and Russians share—from the viewpoint of the defeated: it is not difficult to associate the American "Grays" with the Russian "Whites." The Soviet reader has been fed enough Marxist outlines of history to understand that the American Civil War was a form of bourgeois revolution in which the "forces of progress" triumphed. (The Soviet people have been taught that bourgeois systems are relatively more enlightened than feudal orders.) This is the simplest ideological scheme into which the events described in Mitchell's book can be squeezed.

But the book unexpectedly blossoms with all the colors of real life when it turns out that the "forces of reaction" in *Gone with the Wind* are full-blooded, even likable people. They may, moreover, be noble people—like Ashley Wilkes. The reactionary social structure itself—in this case the feudal American South—is the picture of a well-ordered, harmonious, and organic life. Shown up close, it does not summon the repellent associations that in the naked ideological field arise automatically at the mention of such words as "reaction," "exploiters," or "slavery." It is said at one point in *Gone with the Wind* that, "Accepting *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as revelation second only to the Bible, the Yankee women all wanted to know about

the bloodhounds which every Southerner kept to track down runaway slaves." But Peter, Aunt Pitty's aging driver, says of the Yankees: "Dey din' sot me free. Ah wouldn' let no sech trash sot me free." Elsewhere passing mention is made of the fact that those plantation owners who mistreated their slaves were universally scorned by decent Southerners, that the former were rejected by the Southern community and by plantation "society." No, it is the Yankee emancipators, who call Uncle Peter a "nigger," who are the repugnant figures in the book. Palievsky writes in his preface that the audience at the Atlanta premiere of the film based on Mitchell's novel was ecstatic at a scene in which Scarlett kills a Yankee marauder. I am certain that, were the film shown to a Soviet audience, its reaction would be exactly the same. Art—even art as questionable as that of Margaret Mitchell—is more powerful than ideological schemes.

No book, of course, even another *War and Peace*, will argue successfully for the beneficence of a patriarchal form of slavery or prove to the reader that freedom is unnecessary: the point is rather that human existence is far more complex and absorbing than any schemes based on elementary categories of good and evil or of progress and reaction. Mitchell's book challenges these categories—and overcomes them. Ideological myths are much stronger in the Soviet Union than they are in America, and this means that the impact of Mitchell's book on the Soviet reader will be more powerful.

The first layer of associations in Mitchell's book, then, will lead the Soviet reader from the antebellum South to prerevolutionary, indeed pre-reform, Russia. (It should be remembered that serfdom in Russia was abolished not by the 1917 Revolution but by the "peasant reform" of the czarist government a half century earlier, in 1861.) But one should not think that the Soviet people today harbor nostalgia for their patriarchal past and that Margaret Mitchell's book feeds that nostalgia. The era of Russian serfdom, with its paternal landowners and blissfully reckless peasants, was indeed *plus*

quam perfectum. The Soviet reader's chief associations are with a more recent time. He is much more impressed by *Gone with the Wind*'s picture of American post-Civil War conditions, of the "reconstruction" of the South. The Reconstruction was the visible embodiment of what in the Soviet Union is called "historical progress," and Chapter Thirty-Seven of *Gone with the Wind* provides a striking picture of its program and method of operation.

Even the most enlightened Russian readers will be struck by the resemblance between the aftermath of the American "bourgeois revolution" and that of the Soviet socialist revolution. Their first impression will be of a universe wracked by chaos. They are all too familiar with what comes next: legal caprice, the pitting of society's lower elements against its respectable members, demagoguery, rising crime, economic collapse, and the formation of a "new class" from the foul but clever operators ("carpetbaggers") who have become life's masters. Those who emancipate the negroes prove to be racists themselves. The champions of democracy strip the defeated side of the most basic human rights. How telling is the episode in which the Yankees, in their desire to elect a Republican governor of Alabama, rush entire trainloads of negroes from town to town so that their votes will be put to good use.

In conditions such as these, even the creation of the Ku Klux Klan seems a natural defensive measure. (This is so scandalous a suggestion that Palievsky in his preface is quick to voice his disagreement with Mitchell on this point.) The Klan indeed holds a great temptation: all the book's noble (or, in Soviet terminology, "positive") characters become members. But the Soviet reader finds their actions perfectly comprehensible, for these people were made into what Russians know as *lishentsy*, a very expressive word for which the English phrase "deprived persons" is hardly the proper translation. There is even a socialist shadow on the horizon: the "expropriation of the expropriators," the threat that the property of the

rebels (which has already been largely destroyed and burned) will be confiscated.

Russian readers realize, of course, that the victory of the North was not a socialist victory, and they know that, after the harsh ordeals of the Civil War, genuine democracy was restored in America. But these facts, which are in the Russian mind sufficiently abstract, cannot offset the reaction of the Russian reader: for him, Mitchell's book characterizes, by analogy, the Russian Revolution and life in Russia after the Revolution, reminding him of "war Communism" and the New Economic Policy at the same time. And here one may offer a conjecture about why the Soviet authorities agreed to the book's publication: the reality of revolution, as shown in the book, is so grim that it will cause the Russian reader to think twice about any new revolutionary undertakings. In *Gone with the Wind* one freed slave speaks for all when he says: "Mistis, please Ma'm, write mah old Marster down in Fayette County dat Ah's up hyah. He'll come tek dis ole nigger home agin. 'Fo' Gawd, Ah done got nuff of dis freedom!"

The redeeming quality of Mitchell's book is that, despite its stark picture of the postwar South, it is not locked into any loving recreation of an alluring past. In Scarlett O'Hara, Margaret Mitchell created a character of astounding vitality—and it is her vitality that makes her archetypal. Scarlett does not sigh over the past but breaks with it in favor of the future. She is a model of what might be called existential incompleteness, of openness and the ability to live on. There is no better expression of this existential stance, which the rather banal word "optimism" would not begin to describe, than Scarlett's famous pronouncement, "Tomorrow is another day." Here one must speak of stoicism, of the readiness to meet any and all blows of fate, to seize opportunities. Scarlett is capable of accepting any challenge. Rhett Butler tells her, "You've got murder to your credit, and husband stealing, attempted fornication, lying and sharp dealing and any amount of chicanery that won't bear close inspection,"

and adds, "Admirable things, all of them." With every step Scarlett O'Hara acts out Nietzsche's dictum that "life is above morality." It is as impossible to pass moral judgment on Scarlett as it is to pass moral judgment on life itself. And Scarlett feels no pull to the past. About the Southerners she says, "Oh, why can't they forget? Why can't they look forward and not back?"

If the Soviet reader is prepared to associate Mitchell's picture of the patriarchal American South with the old Russia of czarist days and the Reconstruction with the implementation of the Bolshevik Revolution that continues to this day, then he will see himself in Scarlett, his own historical and existential experience. And "the Soviet reader" here means not just an intellectual like Palievsky but even that reader whose good fortune it is to obtain one of the scarce copies of the book at a regional Party conference. The plot of *Gone with the Wind* contains a startling detail: Scarlett takes on convicts as laborers for her sawmill. What is this, for the Soviet reader, but the Gulag archipelago, or in any case its prototype? The sawmill, like the Soviet Union, is industrialized by whatever means are available. In other words, it is not just Russian "Southerners" who can recognize themselves in Scarlett O'Hara but Russian "Northerners" as well—not just the conquered, but also the conquerors. Scarlett thus supplies the Russian destiny with a common denominator and helps in synthesizing and comprehending the Russian national experience, which includes prominently the experience of Communism.

The modern Russian mind perceives Scarlett as a close friend and intimate, as an analogue, one might say, to the Russian soul attempting to survive in desperate straits. In his introduction to the novel, Palievsky says that Scarlett acts "under the pressure of circumstances"; he speaks of the "temporary clouding" of her soul, and continues: "This experience, of course, rang a bell for everyone who had in his way been touched by it." The tense of this sentence needs to be changed: not "rang" but "rings" a bell, not

“had been touched” but “is touched.” Palievsky argues with Mitchell’s own assessment of her heroine as a “prostitute,” saying that “with time the writer warmed to her creation.” Clearly, Palievsky himself sensed in the pragmatic heroine of *Gone with the Wind* a kindred soul.

This sense of kinship raises a question about the neo-Slavophiles themselves, who, it is hardly possible to doubt, are responsible for the Russian publication of the novel. Americans can gain no better insight into the neo-Slavophiles than by way of their admiration for Mitchell’s heroine. To understand this admiration, Americans have only to project their own experience of painful national division onto Russia, with, however, one important correction: in Russia it was not enterprising bourgeois Yankees, possessed of a soberly pragmatic view of existence, who were the agents of division, but rather idealists and fanatics, who turned in time into a criminal mafia: the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. To take a pragmatic stand in Russia today—as the neo-Slavophiles attempt to do—means becoming a part of this mafia: no other avenue is open to the Russian pragmatist. The alternative—opposition to the mafia—means the Gulag or emigration. We are not within our rights to condemn those who do not accept this alternative.

There is a precedent for the neo-Slavophiles’ pragmatic position. Russia endured a similar situation of national division many centuries ago under the Tatar yoke. And it was the wily, calculating, and *pragmatic* Muscovite princes—and not any desperate swashbucklers or idealists—who freed Russia from this yoke. Ilya Ehrenburg captured this fact nicely when he spoke of “the hidden stores of native gumption where from smoke-filled huts Ivan Kalita pieced together a state.” Ivan Kalita was one of the Muscovite princes. They were compelled to bow before the Tatars, to flatter them, to feign being faithful servants, and to petition them for charters of investiture. They were even compelled—so as to achieve the same politi-

cal ends—to ally themselves with the Tatars against the Russian populace. Such an alliance was the resort, for example, of one of the most celebrated Russian princes, Alexander Nevsky. This did not tarnish his image in the Russian mind—he was, on the contrary, proclaimed a saint.

This parallel between the Tatar yoke and the Communist Party’s monopoly on power leads to a heated issue, one that ultimately helps distinguish the neo-Slavophiles from their Slavophile predecessors. The issue is whether the parallel is an appropriate one, inasmuch as the Tatars were outsiders and a foreign enemy while the Communists would seem to have sprung from Russian soil. Palievsky writes that the question posed by Mitchell’s novel is: Are the Yankees Americans? This, in Palievsky’s subtext, means: Are the Communists Russians? There is a tremendous temptation to consider the Communists not homegrown, not Russian, and to declare the socialist revolution a foreign invasion. Even Solzhenitsyn strikes such a chord: he writes in the anthology *From Under the Rubble* that it was Latvians, Hungarians, Jews, Poles, and Chinese—and not Russians—who made up the Bolshevik strike force during the Revolution. Apparently Solzhenitsyn is now prepared to renounce this opinion—his article about events in Poland, “The Chief Lesson,” testifies to his change of mind. But the curious thing is this: if one turns to the American experience, as it is represented in Margaret Mitchell’s book, one finds the following detail: Mitchell writes in *Gone with the Wind* that the Northern army contained a large number of people newly arrived on American shores, people who were not even able to speak English. Is this a chance coincidence? And if not, what is one to make of it?

I believe that this detail, although it conforms to the facts, must be understood as something symbolic rather than factual. A revolution of any sort entails the destruction of the organic order of existence, of what Mitchell calls the “slow-paced glamour” of former days. It is natural that elements alien to the old organic structure should play a

noticeable role in the process of destruction, and yet they are only indicators that the process is in motion; they are not its first cause. More important is what one's attitude should be toward the decaying organic order. Must one always cling to it?

Boris Chicherin, the eminent Russian thinker of the last century, offered a sharp and persuasive critique of what we call today the "organism theory" of society. His critique heralds in many respects Karl Popper's appraisal in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*: the structure of an "organic society" reproduces a certain natural cycle, perpetually returning to the point of departure and following a biological, not an intellectual, rhythm. After Popper there would be no need to recall Chicherin but for one splendid formulation: Chicherin says that an inorganic element is essential in society, and this inorganic element is *freedom*. There is no place for freedom, for the new, in an organic cycle; what is new comes only in human activity that exceeds the boundaries of any organic order.

If there is any difference between the neo-Slavophiles and their Slavophile predecessors, it lies in the fact that they, in their attitude toward life, are turned in the direction of the new. They accept the new, and, like the heroine of Mitchell's novel, they are prepared to make it a part of their own horizon. Their position differs from that of the Slavophiles in that it is not romantic but realistic. The Slavophiles were reactionaries in the sense that any romanticism is reactionary—or better, reactive: it backs away from what is given, from "life in the present." The romantic world view is nature-bound and, the notorious pose of romantic rebellion notwithstanding, makes no provision for the new or for freedom. The lack of freedom in romanticism is, as Berdyaev wrote, one of its intrinsic features.

The neo-Slavophiles differ from their predecessors in seeking not a return to organic principles of existence but rather a synthesis—a synthesis of the organic tradition and the new ingredients of life. In so doing they join the ranks of today's native

Tatars and those whom one old Russian publicist labeled "internal Turks." Whence the neo-Slavophiles' cooperation with a censored press and their willingness to compromise with the authorities, actions that to many seem morally suspect and unbefitting intellectuals.

The Soviet dissident intelligentsia has the same opinion of the neo-Slavophiles that polite Atlanta women had of Scarlett O'Hara, and I doubt that the neo-Slavophiles are any more trusted by Solzhenitsyn than they are by the liberal Westernizing faction in the Soviet Union today. All I would attempt to show is that the neo-Slavophile stance is more complex and, I would say, more forward-looking than is generally allowed. Reconciliation and a complete synthesis of national experience—not division—is their aim. Were the neo-Slavophiles fawners only, they would have no cause to speak of "Russia," as they do; it would be enough for them to demonstrate their Marxist loyalty at every conceivable opportunity.

There is a Russian saying: Love us unclean as we are, who wouldn't love us were we pure. The neo-Slavophiles are "unclean," but then Scarlett O'Hara is not exactly immaculate, and she emerges admirably equipped to contend with harsh circumstances. Grandma Fontaine remarks in Mitchell's book that "Ashley was bred to read books and nothing else. That doesn't help a man pull himself out of a tough fix, like we're all in now." The neo-Slavophiles may earn their bread as literary critics, but they are by no means bookworms.

Marina Tsvetayeva wrote of Tatyana, the heroine of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*: "What other nation has a love heroine like her: daring and dignified, tender—and unbending, all-discerning—and loving." Were a Slavophile of the old school to compare Tatyana with Scarlett he would say that the former is the deeply Christian Russian soul incarnate while the latter is a symbol of the corrupt West. A *neo*-Slavophile would not put it this way; he would see in Scarlett's pragmatism something admirable. The discrepancy is

not evidence of any Russian moral decline, but proof of the tremendous complication of Russian life today.

There is one other factor that would seem to justify a guarded attitude toward the neo-Slavophiles. Their stance appears implicitly nationalistic, which really means that it is anti-Semitic. That, at any rate, is how the present-day liberal Westernizers in the Soviet Union often characterize it. Here again, Margaret Mitchell's book is helpful. Rhett Butler asks Scarlett whether, besides Irish and French, she has any Jewish blood: in short, there is one situation in which every person becomes a Jew. The situation is that of survival. And at present all Russians have become Jews of this sort. For the Russian task at the present moment is not a struggle for political rights but the struggle for survival. One cannot consider life—simple organic being—the exhaustive definition of human existence; but neither can one deny the very principle of life or reject the very fact of life, particularly now, when in Russia the simplest of human rights is at stake—the right to live.

The Russian nationalism of the neo-Slavophiles is nothing more than a struggle for survival, and it is by no means the advocacy of imperialist expansion in foreign policy

and anti-Semitism in domestic policy that today's Russian liberal Westernizers try to portray it is. The latter depict the practices of the Soviet brand of "realistic socialism" as a nationalist degeneration of socialist ideas in Russia, when in fact the relation between the two is the opposite: socialist ideas bring out the worst in any national life. But the experience of evil is indispensable if existence is to be complete and have tragic fullness. Evil must be accepted and lived through—this is what the old Slavophiles failed to appreciate. Berdyaev wrote that the Slavophiles' view of the world contained no hint of tragedy; they had known no catastrophic experience. That experience belongs to the twentieth century.

At one time in czarist Russia (and in the Soviet Union as well) there was another imported novel, also written by a woman, that was extraordinarily popular. The novel was Ethel Lillian Voynich's *The Gadfly*. Its hero was a revolutionary, an Italian who fought against Austrian domination in the 1830s. But Soviet readers are no longer interested in romantic revolutionaries and Scarlett O'Hara has come to take their place. It is indeed gratifying to see that it is a symbol of the American experience that helps make sense of Russian life.

Cézanne's watercolors

by Sidney Geist

Cézanne's touch in the early oil paintings is marvelously heavy, whether he used the loaded brush or the even more loaded palette knife. That this touch could evolve in the watercolors to be the lightest, the most fleeting and allusive in the history of the medium is only another marvel in the career of Cézanne. The ultimate and unpredictable marvel is a very late group of watercolors, where the paper in its turn is loaded with red and blue washes that are symphonic in their density and resonance. Their special beauty has been a stumbling block for the critic; their often fragmentary nature makes them resistant to scholarship.

Always attractive, the watercolors have in recent years become the focus of new attention. They were the vedettes of the 1977-78 Cézanne exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art; and one hundred seventeen of them were seen in the largest show of them ever, originating in Kunsthaus Tübingen early in 1982 and going on to Zurich, where it established an attendance record. Götz Adriani, its curator, is a most energetic Cézannist: in 1978 he mounted a show, also at Tübingen (the sister-city of Aix-en-Provence), of one hundred ninety-seven Cézanne drawings, accompanied by an abundant catalogue. For the watercolors he has provided a long, annotated essay which recently appeared in translation.¹ The large textual pages of the new Adriani are handsomely designed and mercifully readable; the ninety-three color plates are reproduced with sur-

prising fidelity, often in the dimensions of the originals. The book is probably the most beautiful ever published on Cézanne, and a pleasure to handle in spite of its size. In its wake comes the much-postponed, long-awaited *catalogue raisonné* of the watercolors by John Rewald, the doyen of Cézanne studies.² A reference work laden with all kinds of pertinent matter, it fills the gap between Lionello Venturi's catalogue of the paintings (1936) and Adrien Chappuis's of the drawings (1973). The tools are now at hand for a subtler examination of the oeuvre than has hitherto been possible, and this with the great convenience of "Rewald numbers."

Adriani's text is monographic in ambition, the longest yet devoted to the watercolors. Curiously, many of its references to Cézanne's letters lead us to a German edition, as do the references to Joachim Gasquet's memoir of the painter and to Zola's essays on art instead of the more familiar English and French editions of these works: someone hasn't done his homework. In keeping with the curatorial imperative to possess the subject fully, Adriani has brought to the task a large but disorderly array of arguments

1 *Cézanne Watercolors* by Götz Adriani, translated from the German by Russell M. Stockman; 294 pages, \$55.

2 *Paul Cézanne: The Watercolors. A Catalogue Raisonné* by John Rewald; New York Graphic Society, 487 pages, \$150.

deriving from history, biography, psychology, moral judgment, and formal analysis: thus a many-sided traditional approach which assumes that it is necessary to go over the whole life and work in order to examine the watercolors.

On the first page we learn that they are "among the supreme achievements of European art, and no words can do them justice." Unfortunately, nothing in the forty thousand words that follow belies this claim. We find ourselves at once in a critical thicket in which Cézanne suggests "ambiguity by means of clarity," makes use of the "most blatant suppression mechanisms," and where his "intensely personal concepts led him to suppress his subjectivity." The concern over subjectivity never flags: certain early works "reveal a strong tendency to objectify the subjective"; the artist attempts to "transform his subjective confessions into subjective perceptions"; and as he grew older "his very desire to objectivization took on a highly subjective quality." While it is always instructive to review the lives of the masters, Adriani devotes a third of his study to Cézanne's biography, adding little to what is already known and delaying his examination of the watercolors. But it is surprising to read that Cézanne "did without any social contact at all"—no date being given. The painter indeed guarded his privacy, but when he wanted company he had in Aix an elegant circle of acquaintances in several disciplines, including the painter Achille Empeire and the sculptor Phillipe Solari, as well as a few friends whom he knew since childhood. Monticelli and Renoir met with him, not to speak of the stream of young artists who sought him out in his later years. Surprising too is a list of three people with "strong natures" from whom he "drew strength": his father, his boyhood friend Emile Zola, and his son Paul. What of his mother, whom he loved and who always supported his efforts to pursue art? There was his sister Marie, of whom he said, "I lean on my sister and she leans on the Pope." And "the humble and colossal Pissarro," from whom he learned so much. Cézanne's

wife, who sat for twenty-seven portraits, is not on Adriani's list, though he does make a passing reference to the salutary effect of her presence on Cézanne's painting in the early years of their liaison.

In keeping with the pieties that often invade discussion of the watercolors, Adriani sees the medium as fraught with crises. "Every brushstroke . . . laid down is an irrevocable statement"; true, but every brushstroke may be modified by another laid on or near it. "Nothing can be left to chance" (and Rewald says the same thing). But watercolor is *par excellence* the realm of chance. To be sure, Cézanne rarely permits his color to run—his brush is too discreet for that—but it often lays down touches, not strokes, and a touch is intended to have a chancy, accidental shape—an accident created by the artist. But I think there are larger chance occurrences in the watercolors. Sometimes tones are laid down as grounds which are then "found" by the artist and worked over. (In a sense he followed this procedure in oil painting, working over old canvasses and leaving visible part of the original surface.) The final state of his spare watercolors could scarcely have been planned; the first touches of color were a throw of the dice—on the field of consciousness as on the sheet of paper. Very chancy are the tentative strokes that surround a fruit or other form like a nimbus; hardly planned, they record the effort to find a limit, and this is sometimes found soon and sometimes late, but surely according to an unpredictable unfolding of the image. Still on the dangers of watercolor, Adriani points out that "Corrections are impossible." But these are not the terms in which to discuss the work of a master.

Sensibly, he separates himself from the old debate as to whether the watercolors were independent creations or preparatory studies for the oils (a matter Rewald worries); they served a variety of purposes. The subjects of the watercolors, as he says, are like those of the oil paintings, with an emphasis on landscape and a neglect of the portrait. Apart from the differences arising from the

two mediums, I find very few watercolors show the bending or displacement of a table edge or wainscot common to the oil paintings, and only two display the elaborate arrangement of a tablecloth so often evident in still lifes done in oil. These still lifes, then, are relatively reportorial, marvelously executed, but rarely showing the imaginative investment of their counterparts in the heavier medium. On the other hand, landscape thrives in the watercolors, offering occasions for the fragmentary view that is "true" as far as it goes, yet perfectly abstracted, magically precipitated, from the welter of the given. Like nothing else in Cézanne's production, these glimpses of nature are musical, *études* in a Debussian mode.

Examining figure subjects, especially the early ones with an obvious erotic character, Adriani becomes disturbingly moralistic. Of *The Wine Grog*, which depicts two reclining nude lovers, he says: "she is the goods, he the consumer." The scene is relaxed, the figures are hardly touching, and the man smokes a pipe! *A Modern Olympia* (an oil painting) is described as a commentary on "the uneasy alliance between the artist and the cocotte"; it shows a scene in a seraglio, with a man observing a woman crouching above him on a pile of cushions. The theme of the erotic woman is capped by a long quotation—from a letter of Zola's concerning his novel *Nana*—that is distasteful in the original French, offensive in English, but seemingly approved by Adriani. Oddly enough, when he discusses the scenes of male bathers "who are strictly segregated sexually," he fails to recognize their erotic significance, which is homosexual. He calls them "serene symbols," "innocent of all lasciviousness." Yet one of these, plate 115, is far from serenity or innocence; we will return to it.

Adriani's plate 4, *Violent Scene*, shows a work that is plate 14 in his 1978 catalogue of the drawings. He has changed his mind, but it is still a pen drawing in sepia, with some ink made to run below a woman being murdered. (The drawing is not included in Rewald's catalogue.) It is unfortunate that

he has opted to orient his plate 63 vertically; he admits to some doubts about it, but Rewald's case for horizontality, based on his acquaintance with the subject, cannot be denied. A final chapter entitled "The Late Watercolors" had led me to expect a close reading of them. By an odd fate a watercolor, referred to as plate 125 and explored closely for half a page, is not reproduced. And a color analysis that goes on for a page and a half (over eight hundred words) never sends us to any work reproduced in the book. I can think of nothing more pointless than an extended analysis—especially of color—without an example to test it against.

All is not lost: besides the excellent color plates, the book's slip-jacket is covered with an enlarged detail of a late watercolor in which we can follow every stroke and touch, discern each nuance and transparent overlay, feel the flutter of sensibility and read the cumulative structure. With such an extraordinary image at hand to supplement the excellent color plates, every viewer can be his own analyst, while waiting for the watercolors to find their Rilke or Apollinaire, or their Steinberg.

John Rewald's catalogue, as we learn in its preface, is based on materials collected by Venturi up to the time of his death in 1961. In the intervening years Rewald has pursued the project in several directions, assembling a small group of Cézanne scholars in 1964 to establish "the foundations of a new chronology," studying gallery records, and availing himself of new researches both here and abroad. His own efforts have been completed by an extensive list of exhibitions, contributed by Jayne Warman. The first fact to be noted about this catalogue is that it reproduces and records six hundred fifty-one watercolors (in black-and-white; fifty-two of them also appear in a sheaf of color plates). Venturi recorded over eight hundred oil paintings, and Chappuis more than twelve hundred drawings. With the watercolors rescued from scholarly limbo, we now have a recorded oeuvre of some twenty

seven hundred works. The number of "lost" watercolors, known only from photographs, is staggering: more than a hundred.

The record on each work includes the vital statistics—date, size, medium, paper, Venturi and Vollard numbers and Venturi (and other) dates where they exist—a bibliography, a list of exhibitions, a provenance, and, in most cases, some notes: an enormous, detailed compilation. The data are not lying about waiting to be gathered; they must be sought out, collected for years and put in order. (Rewald has been concerned with Cézanne studies since 1933, well before Adriani was born.) Every item in such an accumulation can present a special problem.

Chronology is the most vexing, since Cézanne dated so few of the watercolors; most are therefore dated on stylistic grounds, often with a spread of several years. Authenticity is a problem, and a sticky one, because a matter of truth for the scholar may be a matter of a great deal of money for a collector, who might be a friend. (There is a hint of hugger-mugger in these precincts: "In Germany . . . the peddling of spurious works now reaches frightening proportions.") One way of avoiding controversy is to omit doubtful works without mentioning them, a method Rewald sometimes employs. On the other hand, he records two works, Nos. 107 and 486, whose genuineness he tells us has been questioned. Adriani reproduces the latter twice and lists it as coming from Vollard; Rewald reproduces it twice, omits Vollard from the provenance, and states that Chappuis and Léo Marschutz (both deceased) "remained unconvinced" that it was by Cézanne. Rewald declares himself on neither work; the execution of the latter surely has nothing to recommend it. A serious question arises in the case of *La Lutte d'amour*, of which there exists a version composed and executed *exactly* like the one in the catalogue, and unacknowledged by Rewald.

Even the titles present problems since, once again, so few can be traced back to the artist. Two at least are inappropriate, telling us more about Rewald than about the im-

ages to which they are attached. *Nu debout tenant une épée* (Standing nude holding a sword) is what he calls No. 26 and dates 1865-70. Now, this nude is not simply "holding" a sword, she is holding it aloft—in her right hand. Her left is holding something too—a flag, the Tricolor in fact, a not insignificant object. Who could this standing (striding) nude, holding these things and surrounded by recumbent (wounded?) men, be? A symbol of France at a certain critical moment? But to say this is a step Rewald refuses to take. I imagine he thinks that to do so would be to interpret, and he can only state the facts. I think it would be to identify, as in the case of a portrait. He notes all the facts and goes only so far as to say, "she presumably represents the new Republic." He even gives us Chappuis's title, *Allégorie de la République*. There is a drawing of the same subject, also of small size, titled *The Republic: Allegory* and dated c. 1871 (C. 96); in it a nude faces the sunrise—thus, a new beginning. Rewald notes that "the subject was found in French reviews and newspapers after the events of 1870-71." By dating the work "1865-70" he can only imply that Cézanne was a precursor here, which is most unlikely. Cézanne surely did both drawing and watercolor after the suppression of the Commune, that is, soon after May 28, 1871, after seeing one of those reviews or newspapers.

A bizarre example of a title is the one given to No. 29, *Femme piquant une tête dans l'eau*, which translates as "woman diving into the water," with "headfirst" implied. This title was bestowed on the work by Félix Fénéon, once director of Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, whom Rewald characterizes as "highly literate" and "a most elegant Symbolist critic." The title is in fact an example of Fénéon's literary piquancy; *Le Plongeon* (The Dive) would have served. Rewald's note goes on to say, "Chappuis felt that it would be more natural to consider this an image of a youth diving." Rewald does not argue the point; his use of Fénéon's language must signify agreement with him—and this in spite of Chappuis's vastly greater compe-

tence and of a drawing, *Study of Nudes Diving* (C. 96), showing two *men*. Rewald himself refers to a "later treatment" of the subject, No. 493, which he describes as "two diving figures," surely men. The matter of the sex of the lone diver—and you would have to have a tin eye to see it as female—involves a question Rewald doesn't raise and which is behind Chappuis's "natural": How, in an image without a diving board or other swimmers, would Cézanne come to depict a woman diving? In view of the rest of his oeuvre, such a subject is unimaginable. It is, besides, symbolically impossible—but that's another story.

Although Rewald includes sheets that are essentially drawings with very little color, I shall point to an interesting case of such a sheet's omission. We can touch on several of the cruxes that arise in compiling a *catalogue raisonné* by examining a work to which I referred earlier.

L'Eternel féminin is reproduced in color as plate 3 in Rewald's introductory essay and again as No. 57 in the catalogue proper. On comparing the two plates we see that the black-and-white is cropped by at least a half inch along the bottom, a loss that represents about $\frac{5}{8}$ " on the $\frac{6}{8}$ " original. Fortunately, this shortcoming is made up by the presence of the color plate, but we can only wonder how many other images have been cropped. As I have already stated, I have the impression that Rewald would claim that the catalogue is a place for the facts—description, not interpretation—yet he is clearly interpretative when he says of this work, "While such a theme is obviously fraught with erotic elements, Cézanne has somehow failed to conjure them up"; or notes, "The naked and clumsy woman," and "a certain degree of irony." For myself, a striking element in the painting is the red-cloaked bishop in the center into whose miter (*mitre*) the woman's right leg seems to descend. Cézanne thought enough of this unusual feature to preserve it in the oil painting based on the watercolor/gouache. Rewald often relates other works to the watercolors and he mentions the oil painting (V. 247, 1875-77) but not a draw-

ing (C. 362, 1871-75) also related to it and surely preceding it. The latter shows a half-reclining nude woman in the same pose as that of the woman in *L'Eternel féminin*, and like her she faces left. A clothed man, whom we see from the rear, reads to her from a book or sheaf of papers held in his hand; he is probably a poet. Only one lower leg, the right, of the woman is adumbrated; she seems to be resting on a curious slanted structure, not a couch, of which we can make sense only when we turn the page upside down. We then see that the elements below her are two rows of chimney pots. These are executed in watercolor—and we have stumbled on one of the problems that cataloguers are always facing, and that Rewald solves by honoring Chappuis's decision to record this item as a drawing. But we have stumbled on something else too. If the woman's right leg would continue downward, it would run into the chimney pots (*mitre*). This situation is surely evidence that, in making the watercolor and then the oil, Cézanne, who decried "*littérature*" in painting, was nevertheless impelled here by a verbal association, changing the *mitre* of the drawing into the graphically more plausible *mitre* of the paintings. His involvement in this visual/verbal pun was no doubt enhanced by the fact that a Saint Mitre Chapel is situated in St. Sauver Cathedral in Aix.

A clear case of wordplay occurs in No. 209, where a watercolor of a hydrangea (*hortensia*) occupies the left side of the sheet, while at the upper right (at a right angle to it) is a pencil drawing of Mme Cézanne, whose given name was Hortense. Rewald remarks that the two studies are related "only 'symbolically' (something extremely unusual for Cézanne) . . ." It is, in fact, a frequent occurrence; what is unusual in this case is the obviousness of the verbal link. Another example of this kind of "symbolism" turns up in *L'Ermite*, 1877 (R. 66), which—and here Theodore Reff is cited—"represents St. Anthony's dwelling as described in the opening paragraphs of Flaubert's [*La Tentation de Saint Antoine*]." The work shows the dwelling, a large cabin, on

the left; to the right of it, St. Anthony; immediately to his right, a large cross; and to its right and rising from the ground, a tall serpentine form. There is nothing else in the picture except the meagerly suggested ground and background. Now, in 1873 Cézanne had done an oil painting of a cottage and called it *La Maison du Père LaCroix, Auvers* (V. 138). Since the watercolor depicts the dwelling (*la maison*) of St. Anthony, a Desert Father (*Père du désert*), with the cross (*la croix*) and a large worm (*ver*; and *Auvers* sounds like *au ver*, "with a worm"), and since nothing else intervenes in this series, it is, whatever else it may be, a rebus of the title of the earlier work in oil. Such a feature in such an artist is most unexpected; it is by no means alone in the oeuvre.

In associating the watercolors with other works by Cézanne or by others, Rewald bases himself on resemblances, that is, he proceeds optically. But the case just detailed demonstrates that other approaches are possible. Cézanne is constantly revealed as even more extraordinary than we had thought, an artist who must be explored by unorthodox means.

Rewald sometimes neglects the traditional methods. *La Toilette*, No. 386, shows a standing nude before a small mirror on a low chair. "An oil sketch closely related to this watercolor" is mentioned, but not the fact that both are related to Delacroix's *La Levée* (with a larger mirror standing on a table)—a curious lapse since the bibliography on No. 386 (in fine print) lists an article that cites the Delacroix. Rewald notes that the figure in the watercolor is "carefully established," while the lines making the body's contour in the oil are "tentative and even confused." He concludes: "This is the more surprising as the watercolor must have preceded the oil"—presumably because the earlier study should be the more tentative. Yet it is far from certain that the watercolor came first: the oil sketch is much closer to the Delacroix, and the watercolor seems based on it, with a variation in the treatment of the mirror.

Another place where Rewald sees confu-

sion is *Baigneurs*, c. 1890 (R. 134). The whole note on this work follows: "Like No. 132, this is essentially an extensive pencil study with occasional application of color. A somewhat confused work." It shows a frieze of nude men along a stream, and is no more confused than three other similar subjects which are reproduced. Like two of them it has an "all-over" character resulting from equal accenting of figures and background—and almost half its area is covered with color. Though not "confused," the work is agitated, both in the artist's touch and in the gestures of the men. The reason is not far to seek: the second figure, facing the seated first bather, has a well-defined phallus which is flung or pointing upward, the only unequivocal rendering of this feature in the oeuvre, replete as it is with images of nude men in all mediums. This watercolor is one of Adriani's "serene symbols," but it doesn't seem to have been so for Cézanne.

If Rewald finds confusion in the last two works, he finds fault elsewhere to a degree that is disconcerting. In a landscape (R. 17), Cézanne "did not quite succeed" in creating "a convincing unity." When Cézanne "failed" to conjure up the erotic elements with which *L'Eternel féminin* is "obviously fraught" (see above), he failed only to make a picture the writer would like to see. Although *Fumeur accoudé* is said to be "a monumental study," Cézanne "seems to have experienced some difficulties with the massive hand." Of *Femme nue debout*, 1898-99, measuring thirty-five by twenty-one inches, the note tells us: "The fact that [a five-inch] strip was added to the top of the original sheet leads to the presumption that the artist started his work at the bottom and ran out of space as he reached the upper part"; he "miscalculated" since he "was not accustomed to representing large standing figures." All of this presumes too much. Cézanne had for some time been working on *The Large Bathers* (Barnes Foundation) with figures larger than this one. There is something grotesque about the idea that he started with the feet and worked his way up the figure—like pulling up a window shade—

only to find that the head and arm went to the top of the sheet. This would have been a grave miscalculation, one that does not jibe with an artist who had been *composing pictures*, many with standing figures, for forty years. I see no reason not to think that he added the strip at the top *before* he began the watercolor. According to this view, he did not add the strip at the bottom because it would have cut across the legs. Since the arm and head at the top overlap the seam by only a quarter of an inch, he calculated very closely.

Comparing two works of 1888-90 which contain similar objects, the writer explains the changes Cézanne made in what is taken to be the second work: he introduced a green pear to replace the "clumsier, reddish-yellow one, thus shifting accents and 'tightening-up' the whole." This book repeatedly accuses Cézanne of such naïve pictorial gambits. Yet ordinary mortals and even Rewald have as much chance of second-guessing a great artist as they have of guessing the next move of a chess grandmaster. We read that the watercolors of this period have "a lightness gained from knowing when and where to stop." These terms belong to the language of taste, of design and decoration. They are not proper to the discussion of one of the great flights of the human imagination.

A catalogue is not in the first place intended to evaluate or interpret an oeuvre, yet it cannot help reflecting the values and ideas of its creator, and this is the function of the introduction and the notes, although evaluation often shines through the factual record itself. For a reader—as opposed to someone seeking a date or measurement—the notes in this catalogue are disappointing. What do you say after you have stated the facts? It can only be observed that Rewald—after half a century of exposure to Cézanne—has very little to say about the pictures and nothing like an idea about them; this is the hidden damage of this branch of art history. His preferred subject is provenance; a social history lurks behind Rewald's knowledge of

the changes in ownership—in which he was sometimes personally involved. Ever the connoisseur, he will say, of No. 201, "This is an exquisite work," or, of No. 299, "A sheet of great freshness and charm." He is interpretative usually in reaction to another writer, rarely initiating this type of discourse. His occasional analytical observation is illuminating, as when, for No. 264, he notes that "The pyramidal shape of the roof seems to have appealed to the artist." Analyses by Venturi (quoted seventy-five times), Chappuis (a hundred times), and Paul Machotka sometimes run to hundreds of words. Citations from Alfred Neumeyer often remark on the weather in the watercolors, a subject as pregnant as the taste of Cézanne's apples; of No. 382, showing a crumpled jacket on a chair, Neumeyer says, "The rich play of flowing heavy curves lend [sic] a simple majesty to an everyday object"—but fails to recognize that this is a terrifying image! Of No. 611, three skulls on an Oriental carpet, Daniel Catton Rich is quoted: "As a theme, what could be more trivial? [!] But Cézanne turned this exercise into a glowing color pattern . . .," etc. Astonishingly, since we are dealing with Cézanne's last years, C. Abraham is quoted in a similar vein from a 1963 catalogue: "Nothing in the stylistic treatment of this study [No. 613, a single skull] suggests the contemplation of death: it could just as well be a study of fruit." Does Rewald agree or disagree? Is all this "history" or the old files on Nos. 611 and 613? Hard to say. Could it be that in these late watercolors Cézanne paints the skull (*crâne*) in such a vigorous, forthright, and colorful manner because *crâne*, as an adjective, means "bold"?

In one of his few speculative excursions Rewald observes, a propos of a still life, No. 224, that the surface of a washbowl is undecorated and a jug has a floral design, while the same objects, in a drawing, show the washbowl covered with dots and the jug bare of design. "This raises the question whether Cézanne 'tampered' with the appearance of still-life components when it suited his purpose. Such a procedure would

seem to contradict the artist's legendary submissions to his observations." Rewald, the photographer of the sites of Cézanne's landscapes, would seem to be in a position to inform us on the matter of tampering vs. submission, but here as elsewhere he does not take a stand, preferring to raise a question and remind us of a legend. Nature was Cézanne's mistress and he was faithful to her in his fashion, which was to be faithful to his "sensations": "Painting from nature," he said, "is not copying the object; it is realizing one's sensations." The evidence that he tampered with what was given to sight, apart from No. 224, would take us far afield; the evidence for a propensity to tamper is plentiful. It is safe to say that the great number of inventions had an enormous effect on works done from nature, an effect more deep and widespread than the word "tampering" would indicate. How, in any case, does a pinched notion like "tampering" enter the discussion of art, the arena of imagination?

Rewald notes, of No. 601, c. 1900, female bathers under a bridge, that "the composition of this work appears unrelated to any other scenes of bathers that Cézanne drew or painted in watercolor or oils." But as part of his meditation on the Bathers, it is related to *The Large Bathers* (Philadelphia Museum of Art) by the fact that in the watercolor the figures are under the arch (*arc*) of a bridge, and in the oil painting they are by the Arc River. Many relations between the works are missed because of the habit of looking for graphic similarities alone. Apart from the subtle verbal connections which I propose, comparisons on the axis of chronology are important in Cézanne studies and are seldom undertaken because in all Cézanne catalogues works are often grouped by subjects, the manifestly related portraits, landscapes or still lifes. An absolutely chronological arrangement—an impossibility—would provide nothing less than revelations; it can be approximated by going against the current of the catalogues.

In spite of my strictures, the usefulness of the new catalogue is undeniable. It will be

consulted for years, enabling us to make cross-references with the oil paintings and the drawings that were hitherto impossible or very difficult.

Rewald has done his homework and everyone else's too, noting here a tree misread as a door, a picture published sideways in 1973, a chimney mistaken for a tower in 1975. (Intent as he is on the correction of error, he fails to see the significance of these misreadings, of the myriad ambiguities, unidentifiable objects, illegible views of nature.) In one of his longest notes he demolishes Douglas Cooper's case for the inauthenticity of No. 550. He himself errs occasionally: the tiles in No. 191 are six-sided, not "octagonal"; in No. 295, flowers are held in the right hand, not the left; the title under plate No. 255 should not read "Montbriand" but "Bellevue," as in the note. These are slips, the proofs of humanity. But there is a lapse in observation when he takes the table in Nos. 185-7, 542 and 543 to be the same as that in the still lifes Nos. 552, 554 and 563, and four oil paintings; the tables differ in the design of the legs and aprons, as can be seen from a photograph of the latter on page 255. The peasant who sat with his daughter for *The Card Players* (Barnes Foundation) was not Alexandre Paulin, but Paulin Paulet. (Rewald's information came from Paul Cézanne *filz*, my informant was Paulet's grandson.) These are tiny flaws in the structure of fact that Rewald has raised, but through them we can glimpse the archivist immured within. With a vast documentation at his disposal and in spite of endless data on his subject, he is unable to strike off an observation, *aperçu*, or idea about the oeuvre by putting any two together. To do that would require a movement of the imagination or still another datum, the one that is always missing.

On October 14, *The New York Times* published an article by Michael Brenson entitled "Head-hunting in Cézanne," in which he referred to an article of 1975 where I broached the idea of hidden (unconscious) imagery in Cézanne, a matter that elicited

from Rewald the epithet in Brenson's title. His article was occasioned by a large head he had noticed in a Cézanne watercolor, c. 1900 (R. 507), recently exhibited at Princeton. The head is indeed there; in fact, it occupies almost all of the painted area. And it can be identified: showing a goatee, it is a head of Achille Empereire, an artist Cézanne loved and of whom he had done a large splendid portrait many years before. The watercolor's "affective moment," to use Meyer Schapiro's term, was surely the death of Empereire in 1898.

I cannot resist citing another example of hidden, or cryptomorphic, imagery which illustrates the intricacy of the Cézannian imagination. *Roses dans un vase*, c. 1885 (R. 215), is reproduced at nine inches, half as tall as the original. In a red rose at the upper left of the bouquet is an excellent profile, $\frac{3}{4}$ " high, of Emile Zola looking to the left. To the right of this, after a gap of about a half inch, is a rose with another excellent "hid-

den" profile, this time of Alexandrine, the wife of Emile, looking as it were, at the back of his head. (In the original, these portraits must be $1\frac{1}{2}$ " high.) In 1888 Zola established a liaison with a young woman who had worked in his household, Jeanne Rozerot, and they eventually had two children. Although Cézanne was out of touch with his old friend since 1886, the gossip would have reached him quickly, for the liaison was no secret and Zola had become a public figure. We can hear *rose* in the first part of *Rozerot*; the last syllable is "red" in German, a word that Cézanne, with his linguistic talent, would have known, and, Provençal that he was, he would have pronounced the final "t." The watercolor is executed in a much looser style than the four that face it, dated c. 1885, one that he began to use at the end of the decade. On two scores, then, we have reason to re-date this watercolor as of 1888-90. The head we hunt is the ever more amazing head of Paul Cézanne.

Civilization and its malcontents: responses to *Typee*

by Peter Shaw

Typee, Herman Melville's slightly fictionalized memoir of his stay among the cannibal islanders of the Marquesas in 1842, was a first, youthful work. Melville went on to write three more books about his seagoing adventures, always improving his skills as a writer. And yet none of these works—not *Omoo* nor *Redburn* nor *White-Jacket*—comes close to recapturing the literary power and philosophical suggestiveness of *Typee*. Not only did *Typee* establish Melville's fame, first in England and then in the United States, but it continued to be read when *Moby-Dick* was forgotten, and still occasions new interpretations, most of them having to do with the question of Melville's allegiance to civilization.

The tale begins when an ill-managed, foul, depressing whaler sails into the bay of a paradisaal island. Two adventurous youths—Melville, who is the book's narrator, and his friend Toby—jump ship and escape into the interior. The highlands to which they flee unexpectedly turn out to be cold and forbidding. They have planned to seek out a peaceful tribe called the Happers, and to hide among them until their ship has sailed away. But in clawing their way down from the heights, they stumble into the wrong valley. They find themselves among the Typees: cannibals so fierce that they are a terror to all who know of them. Miraculously, for reasons that Melville is never able to divine, he and his friend Toby are given a friendly welcome by this tribe, and they settle down to a

life as honored guests. Yet they prove to be prisoners as much as guests, kept under constant surveillance by their hosts, and prevented from moving about freely.

Because Melville is suffering from a bloated, apparently infected leg, Toby is eventually allowed to seek help. He is tricked aboard a ship in need of hands, though, and never returns. Ignorant of Toby's fate, Melville cannot be sure of his own. Nevertheless, in the intermissions of his understandable fears, he manages to savor the pleasures of what turns out to be a veritably paradisaal valley.

There follows the memorable heart of the book. Melville describes a life of lazily sensuous pleasures far removed from his latest contact with civilization: the rigid, regimented economy of shipboard. With a beautiful native girl, Fayaway, he loafs, bathes, eats, cavorts. In paradisaal Typee, rules and restrictions come to seem superogatory. Observing no instances of theft, Melville concludes that he has found an egalitarian society where laws are unnecessary. The only work a Typee performs in the course of his life is the planting of a single breadfruit tree for each of his offspring. This and other fruits are abundant in the lowlands that they inhabit, and the sea yields up its harvest when the men are of a mind to fish. Sensuality is unfettered. The women take several husbands without arousing any apparent signs of jealousy. A physically beautiful people, the Typees live in what looks like per-

fect natural health. All in all the chief ills of Western civilization seem to be absent: scarcity, poverty, competition, repression.

The dramatic and philosophical question raised by *Typee* is why, despite all this, Melville decides to escape. When a ship appears in the bay, he resolves to show himself. Many of the Typees—the fiercest among them it would seem—now want to prevent him from approaching the water. But for the first time some of them display what appears to be sympathy for his plight, and they help him hobble and be carried in that direction. They will not let him approach the ship's boat, though, until his part is unexpectedly taken by Marheyo, the somewhat senile old native who has been his host. "He placed his arm upon my shoulder, and emphatically pronounced the only two English words I had taught him: 'Home' and 'Mother.'" This first act of imaginative projection by a Typee is followed by Melville's one act of brutality. He hastily clambers onto the boat. Then, when he is pursued by the horrific, one-eyed chief, Mow Mow, who had led the opposition to his release, Melville makes good his escape by plunging a boat hook just below the native's throat.

This richly paradoxical ending creates feelings of both inevitability and regret. Old Marheyo's unexpected projection of sympathy beyond his time-bound world raises the possibility of a genuine meeting of cultures, yet his insight is limited, making Melville's departure seem inevitable. Melville has deplored the Western relationship to the islanders, pointing out how sailors and missionaries brought with them diseases and instruments of war that decimated native cultures. Now his own blow for freedom puts him in just such a relationship to the Typees.

It is not surprising that certain early readers of *Typee* failed to appreciate its ambiguities. Some early reviewers rigidly lined themselves up as advocates for either civilization or primitivism, quite ignoring Melville's balanced distribution of right and wrong, advantages and disadvantages. Starting with the rediscovery of Melville's works

in the 1920s, modern critics left partisanship far behind. Then, surprisingly, the terms of the old debate were revived in the 1970s. This time, though, there was no one on the scene to represent civilization.

As a result, *Typee* has come to be regarded by recent critics as an unwavering indictment of civilization, as much so in its ending as anywhere else. Does Melville describe there a scene of agonized parting from Fayaway and her family as he stands on the beach waiting for rescue? This only demonstrates a "betrayal of his loved ones."¹ Is Melville forced into an act of violence to save his life? This "demonstrates the universal trait of savagery." Or, still worse, his act teaches that "civilization has succeeded only in magnifying and developing a basic savagery which is found in a less appalling form in a primitive culture."²

Opinions such as these, in which the critics find civilization being exposed as worse than primitive life everywhere in *Typee*, are virtually the only ones currently to be found in academic journals and in books published by university presses. Such publications, it should be noted, are routinely scrutinized and approved by panels of scholars.

From the beginning those reviewers who emphasized Melville's indictments of civilization spoke in the name of social reform. Writing for the Fourierist *Harbinger* of Brook Farm, the utopian community where Nathaniel Hawthorne had briefly resided a few years earlier, John Sullivan Dwight compared the unfettered, communal exis-

1 David Williams, "Peeping Tommo: *Typee* as Satire," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 6 (Spring 1975), 46.

2 Edgar A. Dryden, *Melville's Thematics of Form: The Great Art of Telling the Truth* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968). The chapter on *Typee* is printed—along with early reviews, other essays, a bibliography of writings on *Typee*, and an introductory survey of *Typee* criticism by the editor—in *Critical Essays on Herman Melville's Typee*, ed. Milton R. Stern (G.K. Hall & Co., 1982). The quotations are from p. 181 of the Stern volume.

tence of the Typees with the evils of civilization arising from economic exploitation. Defending civilization were Christian conservatives stimulated in part by resentment at Melville's criticisms of the missionary enterprise. William Oland Bourne of the *Christian Parlor Magazine* wrote a review that Milton R. Stern, the foremost modern critic of *Typee*, has described as "grim, humorless, and righteous." In it, Bourne admits that the bringing of civilization to the islands had some unfortunate consequences. But he accuses Melville of giving a distorted picture by alternately ignoring and temporizing over the "degraded and benighted" practices of the islanders. That such distortion might be part of Melville's literary intention did not occur to Bourne. Nevertheless, he caught Melville in contradictions that can no more be justified from a literary point of view than from a logical or moral one.

The humorlessness and lack of literary sophistication of Bourne and subsequent Christian reviewers have permitted modern critics to dismiss their arguments. Not so Melville, though, who evidently read Bourne's review with care. For example, Bourne pointed out that in his narration Melville both protested the use of the word "savages" and demonstrated its appropriateness, in one instance following his complaint with an example of native behavior that justified such usage in the very next paragraph. Melville proceeded to remove both paragraphs (along with rephrasings of several descriptions too explicit in their sexual details). These changes appeared in a second American edition a few months after the first. Their fate at the hands of modern editors, a group with no apparent allegiance to either side in the civilization-primitivism controversy, reveals how far scholarly capitulation to civilization's discontents has progressed in recent years.

At Northwestern University an edition of Melville's works based on modern principles of scholarly editing has been coming out since 1968. Its editors have seen fit to reject Melville's revisions. To do so they rest

their case, as far as one can make out, on the fact that Melville revised *Typee* at the request of his publisher. Yet the rules of modern editing enjoin acceptance of an author's "final intentions," which is to say his last set of revisions, whether or not they have come at someone else's behest. No rule is without its exceptions, to be sure. But adherence to an author's final intentions is so central to the contemporary editorial enterprise that one is surprised to find an exception being made under almost any circumstances. And still more surprising is it that the breaking of the rule is hardly discussed in the two elaborate and lengthy scholarly essays that accompany the Northwestern edition—essays containing exhaustive discussion and justification for every single comma inserted or removed by the editors.

One of the editors candidly reports that in writing to his publisher Melville "strongly implied that his revisions were thoughtful and voluntary." In order to lend "a unity to the book which it wanted before," he had decided to remove those passages that were "altogether foreign to the adventure."³ In these and similar remarks not cited by the editors, Melville made it clear that he was satisfied with his changes. Subsequently, furthermore, though he had no need to mollify English public opinion, which was put off neither by *Typee*'s sexual explicitness nor its criticisms of American missionaries, Melville attempted to persuade his English publisher to make the same cuts. "The permanent reputation as well as the present popularity of *Typee*," he argued, "will be greatly promoted by the revision."⁴ Yet not

3 "Historical Note" by Leon Howard and "Note on the Text" by the editors, in *Typee*, vol. I of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Herschel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1968), 288, 315.

4 See Herman Melville to John Murray, July 30, 1846, in *The Letters of Herman Melville*, ed. Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman (1960), 43-44. Melville's letters cited below are from the same source.

even this appeal to the primacy of aesthetic form—something usually dear to the twentieth-century sensibility—could deter the Northwestern editors from rejecting the revisions.

It is a maxim in the study of intellectual history that the faith of each historical period lies hidden in its unargued assumptions. Such is the case at hand. The Northwestern editors assumed that contemporary objections to Melville's remarks about religion or his treatment of sex could only reflect the religious intolerance and sexual prudery of the nineteenth century. Under the circumstances their breach of rules to restore passages critical of civilization and religion, along with sexually explicit passages, presented itself as self-evidently enlightened.

In the 1950s Richard Chase, Milton Stern, and a few other critics developed an approach to *Typee* that had the incidental result of honoring Melville's final intentions. For by concentrating on what Melville had termed "the intrinsic merit of the narrative alone," they effectively made the discursive passages less important. Chase, the author of the seminal *The American Novel and Its Tradition* as well as a book on Melville, was one of the outstanding scholar-critics of his age. Stern is a leading scholarly authority on Melville, and is most recently the editor of a collection of essays on *Typee*. Along with other critics of the 1950s, Chase and Stern began to treat *Typee* as a work of fiction. Scholarship had demonstrated that Melville's account was substantially accurate, its fictionalization amounting for the most part to a heightening of romantic details and a claim to have spent several more weeks in *Typee* than was probably the case. On the other hand it was possible to argue that Melville the narrator was not quite identical with the Melville who experienced the adventure. The latter, furthermore, introduces himself to the Typees as "Tom," a single syllable that he thinks they will have less trouble pronouncing than his own name. They can only say it as "Tommo," however, and from the point of view of

some literary critics the resultant false name given to Melville amounts to his being fictionalized into a character.⁵

Once *Typee* became a fictional work, it was but a small step to seeing it as a symbolic one as well. The primitivism-civilization conundrum could now be resolved, not by Melville's philosophizings, but chiefly with reference to the needs of Tommo's personal development and through the interpretable meanings of such symbols as his infected leg. So long as *Typee* had been regarded as a straightforward memoir, Melville's leg appeared as simply one more detail of his adventure. Now Richard Chase noted that the leg improved while Tommo enjoyed the pleasures of *Typee* but swelled up again when the natives threatened to cover him with tattoos. The pain, as Stern agreed, was a call back to civilization.

By treating *Typee* as a fictional and symbolic work, Stern and Chase were able to remove any unpleasant, chauvinistic overtones from Tommo's choice in favor of civilization. Their approach, however, opened the door to a rejection of this choice by their successors. Thus a typical critic of the 1970s no longer accepted the return to civilization as defensible. *Typee* became nothing more than "a comprehensive satire which unmasks the damned and damning intellect of the Western mind itself." As for Melville's leg, "if the swelling is a symbol at all," another critic writes, "it probably signifies his *attraction* to *Typee*." (Italics in original.) For still another critic the pain serves not as a reminder of home but rather "points in fact to Tommo's inability to embrace physicality, an inability which flows from his having been infected by Western consciousness, reason, and intellectuality." And this critic adds: "the fact that Tommo's attraction towards these things is symbolized by a painful infection should be suf-

5 Chase's discussion is reprinted in the Stern anthology from *Herman Melville: A Critical Study* (1949); Stern's discussion, also reprinted in his anthology, is from *The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville* (1957).

ficient evidence of Melville's judgment of their ultimate worth."⁶

As these last remarks suggest, once Tommo had been disassociated from Melville, any loyalty to civilization found in the narrative could be dismissed as an expression of his failings as a character. Accordingly, Tommo was now described as suffering from "sexual perversion and self-conceit," and as "selfish and so egocentric that he must impose his will wherever he is."⁷ Finally, Tommo is indicted by selective omission in the following account of his escape:

One Typeean does not want to let Tommo leave the island. He swims after Tommo, and Tommo smashes a boat hook into the savage's throat. This, the tale's single scene of violence, concludes Tommo's story.⁸

Tommo is the violent one, the swimming native presumably a kind of disappointed host. But in fact the character who "does not want to let Tommo leave" has indicated his reluctance by hurling a javelin at those on board the rowboat Melville has entered. "Swims after Tommo" omits to mention that this native grips a tomahawk in his teeth, leads a group of swimmers shouting their intention to devour the pursued, and is about to grapple the oars—"the maneuver which has proved so fatal to many a boat's crew in these seas."

In retrospect it is apparent that, though by the 1950s one no longer proclaimed the superiority of civilization, one continued to assume it. Thus, consciously or not, when Stern criticized the "primitive savagery of

the western ship's crews," he was implicitly measuring their behavior against Western civilized norms, and not those of the South Pacific. Similarly, Stern was free to accept Melville's indictment of the West because he never imagined its being employed to repudiate Western values.

At present the consensus that underlay the original fictional and symbolic readings of *Typee* no longer exists. It has been replaced among literary critics by an unremitting cultural self-loathing. The words savagery and civilization have come to be used only with quotation marks—"civilization" to separate oneself from a supposedly self-centered, delusory conviction of cultural superiority, and "savagery" to imply that the term is nothing more than an expression of Western ethnocentrism. As one critic explains, Melville "saw that savagery was a term applicable to the Europeans' colonial and missionary activities in the Pacific rather than to the people they practiced upon." At present the only acceptable use of the terms in question is in phrases such as "the savagery of civilization," which is used by another critic of the same persuasion.⁹

It is true that in *Typee* Melville exclaims: "How often is the term 'savages' incorrectly applied!" And Melville also argues that Westerners have "exasperated" the South Sea islanders "into savages." The remark and the argument, however, both appear in the first of the two contradictory paragraphs pointed out by William Oland Bourne. In the remainder of *Typee*, when Melville employed the term "savages"—some two dozen times—he did so in just the manner his own early paragraph complained of. Thus his narration refers to "savage resentment," "the fickle disposition of savages," an ever-present fear of "the savage nature of the beings at whose mercy I was," and "the craft [i.e., craftiness] peculiar to savages." Elsewhere Melville's adjectives are "simple," "un-

6 Williams, "Peeping Tommo," 47. Mitchell Breitweiser, "False Sympathy in Melville's *Typee*," *American Quarterly* 34 (Fall 1982), 416-17. Thomas J. Scorza, "Tragedy in the State of Nature: Melville's *Typee*," *Interpretation* 8 (Jan. 1979), reprinted in Stern's *Critical Essays*, 239-40.

7 Williams, "Peeping Tommo," 43, 42.

8 Michael Paul Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 48.

9 Larzer Ziff, *Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America* (1981), 5. Louise K. Barnett, *American Literary Racism 1790-1890* (1975), 173.

sophisticated," "heathenish," and "treacherous" savages. Given the choice between bringing these references in line with his complaint about misuse and bringing the complaint in line with them, Melville, as we know, chose to remove the paragraphs singled out by Bourne. In addition, he went so far as to strike out the few phrases in his book that were in *accord* with that paragraph: the similarly apologetic "those whom we call savages" and "noble savage" used as an honorific.

As with "savages," so with "cannibalism," a seemingly unambiguous term that has acquired both quotation marks and a party of apologists. This time the exaggerated mode of early reviewers was never entirely set aside. Thus with a laudable intent to oppose Western cultural self-congratulation, an anonymous early English reviewer fell into blatant illogic:

The Polynesians have the advantage of the cannibals of civilised life, for we have long since made the pleasant discovery, that man-eating is not confined to the Anthropophagi of the South Seas. The latter have undoubtedly one redeeming distinction—they can only devour their enemies slain in battle: there is nothing which man in a civilised state has a keener appetite for than his particular friend.

Stern unfortunately perpetuated this kind of verbal imprecision by referring to the scrounging for edibles aboard Melville's ship when stores were low as an example of "western spoilation and cannibalism." This is a highly emotional way to describe eating the captain's pig.

Stern's successors, again taking matters further than he could have anticipated, used the same kind of imprecision to emphasize not the inhumanity of individual Westerners but rather the culpability of their nations as a whole. Playing on the same word "devour," one critic now asked, "who are the real cannibals, the Typees who practice a ritual of eating the flesh of their dead attackers or the aggressor nations who have

come to devour the islands?"¹⁰ But this is not all: cannibalism has also found its positive defenders.

For some critics the self-evident superiority of primitive life is in itself a sufficient justification of the practice. "The Typees occasionally indulge in headhunting and cannibalism," one of them genially concedes. But more important is their possession of the "one valuable commodity of human existence—happiness." More sophisticated critics begin by reducing cannibalism to the status of a literary trope: "the narrative's central metaphor for the primitive's threat to consume Tommo's contemporary identity." One of these, who has already indicated that he is dubious about the very existence of cannibalism among the Typees, concludes, "Whether or not the Typees are literal cannibals, they are certainly figurative cannibals that are devouring Melville's historical identity."¹¹

When it comes to cannibalism, the fictional Tommo who has already been impugned, is judged to be so hysterical on the subject that his testimony can be safely laid aside. "There is no evidence the Typeeans actually plan to eat Tommo," one critic states with equanimity. Writes another, "He can never rid himself of his fear of their reported cannibalistic practices, although, in fact, he experiences only comfort at their hands."¹² Five recent critics agree that the true problem lies in Tommo's own character. Critic number one has it that in his estimate of the Typees "the impulse to fix on the practice of cannibalism as typifying their character is presented as a feature of Tommo's state of mind." Critic number two writes:

10 Joyce Sparer Adler, "Typee and Omoo: Of 'Civilized' War or 'Savage' Peace," in her *War in Melville's Imagination* (1981), reprinted in Stern's *Critical Essays*, 245.

11 Barnett, *Literary Racism*, 173-4. John Wenke, "Melville's Typee: A Tale of Two Worlds," in Stern's *Critical Essays*, 254. Ziff, *Literary Democracy*, 10.

12 Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 47, and Ziff, *Literary Democracy*, 3.

His exaggerated fears of cannibalism, his horror of tattooing . . . and his repeated attempts to escape his kindly captors suggest that something must be wrong with Tommo.

Critic number three refers to "his fear of cannibalism, which he insists upon keeping alive in himself although he is never threatened by it." Number four: "Cannibalism perfectly embodies Tommo's primitive fears, for the island has awakened the boundaryless, devouring infant within him." And number five, who refers to the illusions not of Tommo but of Melville himself: "Melville may not actually have feared cannibalism, but he seems to have been plagued by psychosomatic symptoms of tension."¹³

The only possibility not entertained by these critics is that a man isolated among known cannibals might fear for his life. What calls for explanation is the psychology of Melville's reluctance to face the realities of Typee, as evidenced in his managing to ignore cannibalism during the intermissions of his fears. Eventually, as the Typees grow importunate to impose on him what Melville terms "the hideous blemish of tattooing," he recognizes their determination to adopt him as one of them. Now he is in danger not so much of being eaten as of having to join in the eating of human flesh—a quite sufficient reason to seek escape that has also not occurred to the critics.

As it happens, just two years after the appearance of *Typee*, an account of another recent sojourn among the Marquesans was published by one William Torrey, like Melville a young sailor who jumped ship. Torrey, too, was held as an unwilling guest—for eighteen months. During this time he found it necessary to preserve his life by submitting

to being tattooed (on the hands), and then to eating human flesh.¹⁴

But for some critics it is not enough to deny that Tommo is in danger. He is indicted as well for failing to appreciate the *virtues* of cannibalism. That practice, it is explained, is actually a "ritual"—than which there is no higher term of approbation in contemporary literary criticism. Cannibalism intends only the ritual "ingestion of the enemy's virtue," one critic explains. Thus, we suffer from "a false understanding of cannibalism" if, like Tommo, we regard it simply as a matter of killing and eating. For when Tommo sees "first shrunk heads, and then a skeleton in a box to which cling morsels passed over by sated feeders," these "focusing images" serve to expose his inadequate view of cannibalism—an act that "is less a dietary practice than a ritual ingestion of the antagonist's virtue." The benighted Tommo, the argument continues, fails to recognize that the cannibal "is therefore mindful of the individuality of the vanquished." Indeed, the virtues of cannibalism are precisely those calculated to expose Tommo's failures of humanism:

The true difference between Tommo's and the Typees' views of cannibalism is that he considers individuality to be completely free of its vessel, and so concludes that to eat the body is to express contempt for the self: whereas they treat the body as a rich and necessary participant in the personality that is indissociably immured in its texture.¹⁵

"So much for decadent Western dualism" one imagines Cannibal A remarking to Cannibal B as the two perform their richly integrative act.

The critics' apologies for cannibalism clash not only with common sense but also with Melville's treatment of the subject throughout *Typee*. For, far from celebrating cannibalism as ritual, Melville refers to the practice much as he does to "savages." His

13 The five critics are: T. Walter Herbert Jr., *Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization* (1980), 165. Williams, "Peeping Tommo," 37. Ziff, *Literary Democracy*, 10. Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 48. Carolyn L. Karcher, *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville's America* (1980), 4.

14 William Torrey, *Torrey's Narrative* (Boston, 1848).

15 Breitweiser, "False Sympathy," 405, 411.

expressions are “many a horrid rite,” “the frightful genius of native worship,” and “irreclaimable cannibals.” Read selectively, *Typee* can be made to yield up a defense of cannibalism as well as of savagery. Early in the book, for example, Melville dismisses the charge that the Typees trapped and ate white sailors, claiming that they ate only the flesh of their enemies (not their “slain attackers,” which implies that all Typeean battles were defensive). In the scene of discovering the human remains, though, Melville realizes that inasmuch as the severed heads before him have been hanging overhead in pots since his arrival, they cannot belong to recently killed enemy warriors as his hosts insist. “It was plain,” Melville writes,

that I had seen the last relic of some unfortunate wretch, who must have been massacred on the beach by the savages, in one of those perilous trading adventures which I have before described.

It is at this point that Melville—or if one prefers, Tommo—expresses the fear for his life that the critics are united in dismissing.

To be sure, the critics base their apologies for cannibalism not only on Melville, but also on the evidence of modern anthropology. Yet this evidence, too, proves to be very different from what they imagine. As Melville’s discovery scene indicates, cannibalism was *not* limited to the ingestion of the enemy’s virtue. One learns from anthropology, furthermore, that the Typeeans ate children as well as adults, their own tribesmen as well as enemies (and hapless strangers found on the beach). Furthermore, human flesh was eaten not only in ritual, but also as part of the Typeean diet. Nor was the act of cannibalizing limited to warriors, as in some other South Seas islands. It was practiced by women and children as well as men. As for the enemies among those who were eaten, these were by no means limited to battle casualties being used in celebrations of victory:

[Cannibalistic] sacrifices occurred when victims were available at all life-crisis rites of high-status individuals, particularly death, for warfare, to break droughts, to improve harvests, and to ensure the success of constructions.¹⁶

The permanent state of war (of which Melville was aware) applied equally to the Typees and their neighbors. It involved every man, woman, and child’s fear of being taken captive, tortured, and eaten whenever ritual victims were required, a situation that prevailed virtually all of the time.

As to what took place at these rituals, the fragmentary details available throw a ghastly light on the apologetics of contemporary literary critics. Tortures prior to immolation could last for several days. “In cases where a victim was taken alive,” a modern anthropologist reveals, “parts of his body would often be carved, cooked, and eaten before his eyes.” At other times, “eyes were often eaten raw.”¹⁷ Dreadful tortures, the eating of children, a life punctuated by cannibal feasts: these are the realities of Typeean life. They make it possible to answer with some confidence the question “Who are the real cannibals?”

Literary critics have had fun with the inflated rhetoric of “degraded and benighted practices” used by nineteenth-century moralists like William Oland Bourne. Melville himself disarmed his reader by joking at

16 Ralph Linton, “Marquesan Culture,” in *The Individual and His Society: The Psychodynamics of Primitive Social Organization*, by Adam Kardiner (N.Y., 1939, 1955), 181. Additional details of Typee life not directly footnoted come from the following books: Robert C. Suggs, *The Hidden Worlds of Polynesia: The Chronicle of an Archaeological Expedition to Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands* (N.Y. 1962), and *Marquesan Sexual Behavior* (N.Y. 1966). Herbert, *Marquesan Encounters*, already cited. *The Marquesan Journal of Edward Roberts 1797-1824*, ed. Greg Denning (Honolulu, 1974). For Melville’s anthropological knowledge see Charles R. Anderson, *Melville in the South Seas* (N.Y. 1939).

17 Suggs, *The Hidden Worlds*, 44.

the beginning of *Typee* about “cannibal banquets” and, in humorous italics, “*heathenish rites and human sacrifices*.” By the end of the book, though, these phrases take on a deadly seriousness. In view of the narrator’s discovery of human remains (and the anthropological reality behind it), the genuine shock of nineteenth-century man, albeit pompously expressed, does him more credit than the contemporary literary critic’s unflappable sophistication.

To be sure, the attempt to gloss over cannibalism goes all the way back to Montaigne. Up through the nineteenth century, though, it was possible to regard cannibalism as an anomalous, infrequently encountered, minor blot on otherwise ideal societies. Today, we know—or ought to know—that cannibalism is no anomaly, and is by no means the only deficit of the societies in which it appears. Freud observed in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that primitive peoples are subject to “restrictions of a different kind but perhaps of greater severity than those attaching to modern civilized man.” He had in mind the operations of taboo, well described by Melville and identified clearly enough in *Typee* as a system too restrictive for a free thinking Westerner to survive in. “The savage,” Melville writes of the taboo, “lives in the continual observance of its dictates, which guide and control every action of his being.”

Both the taboo and other restrictions among the Typees extended to their fabled sexual freedom and openness. In each family the appearance of unfettered lovemaking hinted at by Melville was, it develops, belied by the chief husband’s control over sexual access to his wife by secondary husbands. The system of multiple husbands and lovers for the women, by the way, hardly supports the contention that Melville’s flight from Typee was an “abandonment of loved ones.” He could hardly have maintained his romantic relationship with Fayaway on Typee except as a pauper and virtual outcast in society. This is because wealth and status came from attracting subordinate husbands to share one’s wife.

The psychoanalyst Abram Kardiner suggested that as a result of the chief husband’s control, most Typeean males nurtured a suppressed jealousy. This found its expression in a resentment of women reflected in certain taboos and in the culture’s folklore. For example, women were forbidden by taboo to enter canoes. Their genitals could render taboo any objects over which they were placed. The apparently enviable sexual activity available to women was, like much else in the culture, not entirely a matter of free choice. Ritual sexual dancing followed by public sexual intercourse was regarded as a woman’s “religious obligation.” Similarly, Typeean children were sexually uninhibited, but a girl’s introduction to sex was often by rape: an eighteenth-century traveler witnessed a girl of eight being held down by four women and made to undergo intercourse.

Melville experienced some of the coercive tendencies of Typee society, but he did not recognize the degree to which these were modulated during his stay. For he had stumbled upon a scarcity economy at a time of remission from its problem of food supply. Though there were no visible signs of the fact, the Typees were actually subject to periodic famines. Soon after the islands had come under European observation some years before Melville’s arrival, a famine had lasted from 1803 to 1813, wiping out an estimated two thirds of the population. Except for the privileged few, the best the society had been able to devise in preparation for its six- and seven-year droughts was a method of storing a one or two year’s breadfruit supply. There was neither any Typee agriculture (as Melville did note), nor any provision for feeding the tribe’s pigs, nor means devised to harvest enough protein from the abundant ocean.

The great feasts, contributing to the impression of abundance reported by Melville and others, were actually expressions of anxiety reflecting far leaner years in the past. Similarly, the resentful taboos on females reflected an accompanying belief in their responsibility for scarcity. As other early

travelers reported, in order to bring rain when the breadfruit failed, a young girl was brought forth and publicly strangled to death by her brother. And during a famine in 1797, "the natives amused themselves" by administering a slight push to a starving, staggering woman and then watching as she toppled to the ground.

It is sometimes argued that the acts of the Typees and other natives occur on a small scale whereas the depredations of Westerners, particularly venereal disease, have amounted, as one critic put it, to "genocide."¹⁸ Yet the unfortunate ravages caused by the transmission of venereal disease from the West, aside from falling short of genocide, were entirely inadvertent. In contrast, the Typees conducted "full fledged wars of extermination." In an amphibious assault on a nearby island they put to death the entire population of a rival tribe—an act of conscious, successful genocide.

One could go on. The list of misconceptions about the Typees covers most of what the critics think they know about them. Sacrificial torture, killing, and cannibalizing were normally carried out only on behalf of the "well placed," a circumstance that refutes the idea of an egalitarian society. Though material objects were not subject to theft, as Melville indicated, unbeknownst to him the theft of food was common. The Typees were most certainly a beautiful, physically robust people. But the analysis of burial remains shows a high incidence of arthritis as early in life as adolescence.

Given the increase in anthropological knowledge about the shortcomings of Typeean culture, the concurrent increase in self-delusion among literary critics calls for some explanation. In the 1970s the liberal and radical politics that had from the beginnings of *Typee* criticism been associated with cultural relativism and celebration of the primitive were adapted to the terms of contemporary politics. Melville's book came to be associated with charges of imperialist war

upon and subjugation of Third World peoples. The critic who used the term "aggressor nations" meant by it "capitalist nations." The critic who found alienation in Tommo's psychology related it to "the alienation of labor in industrial society."

More up to date, another critic has refined the meaning of "exploitation" as it applies to the West in general and Tommo in particular. Without accusing Tommo of taking economic advantage of the Typees, this critic charges him with *mentally* using them for his own selfish purposes. Tommo's contrasting of his own culture with theirs is condemned as an act of "imaginative imperialism." By using the Typees in an argument, it is explained, Tommo makes himself "complicit in the [Western] brutality he claims to deplore." Thus the civilized man's habit of thought is treated as a brutal crime, whereas the primitive's actual brutalities are termed features of an "independent cultural coherence." All this, moreover, is assumed to have been "deliberately" implied by Melville.¹⁹

On the contrary, Melville was at once less ideological and more subversive than his recent critics imagine. Their tendency is to put to rest the discontents of civilization by justifying them. In contrast, *Typee* plunges the reader directly into the disturbing experience of those discontents. The reader subsequently accepts Melville's abrupt return to civilization, but only reluctantly. The lingering impression left by *Typee* is one of unfettered pleasures.irate defenses of civilization in the manner of William Oland Bourne, and denunciations of it as capitalistic in the manner of the latest critics, equally violate the literary integrity of Melville's work.

Criticism properly enters the picture on a different level. Its first responsibility is to honor the literary experience, its second to relocate the frequently subversive thrust of that experience in the context of more permanent values. In times of cultural upheaval such as the 1960s these tasks come to seem particularly onerous. Criticism grows un-

18 Adler, "*Typee* and *Omoo*," 247.

19 Breitweiser, "False Sympathy," 407, 396.

popular with critics themselves. Some of them claim literature's privilege of immersion in the destructive element. Still others subordinate their critical understanding to their political convictions. They prove to abandon their literary responsibilities in favor of political denunciation. On another level, editors prepare texts under the broad influence of the same attitudes.

Underlying these attitudes is a cultural relativism that, while supposedly grounded in anthropologically sophisticated insight, actually rests on an anthropological double standard. Toward the primitive, a stance of nonjudgmental scientific objectivity is assumed; toward the civilized, one of subjective morality. The confident ethnocentrism of native cultures is admired, but the very right to exist of one's own culture is denied.

Such a loss of confidence in and esteem for civilization is not unprecedented. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud described a built-in resentment at the restraints that accompany civilization. Civilized man constantly chafes against these restraints, and is always tempted to repudiate them. During at least two periods in history, Freud suggests, man's accumulated resentments have issued in outright condemnations of civilization. The first of these periods followed the birth of Christianity, and the second the age of exploration. *Typee*, itself a travel book, came at the end of the second period, and capitalized on both contemporary romanticization of the noble savage and a reignit-

ing of the universal urge to flee civilization. It would appear that a third period of the kind drawn attention to by Freud had its birth in the countercultural revolution of the 1960s. One of the fruits of this latter revolution was the repudiation of norms that became a staple of literary discourse in the 1970s and 1980s.

With *Typee*, though, there was a problem. Here the critics' attempts to idealize the primitive and denigrate their own culture piled up too many evident contradictions. As a result the culturally relativist critics of generous impulse were forced into ever mounting violations of elementary morality. The process wrote in small the fate of progressive thought in the twentieth century. First came commitment to an ideal society—in this case that of the Typees—which seemed to hold the promise of a better future for mankind. The champions of this society denied or minimized its imperfections, or compared them with supposedly worse practices in their own societies. Then it developed that behind the façade there lay hidden a great crime. The secret price of social harmony was murder—in this case murder of the most horrible kind imaginable, by torture and cannibalism. And yet this horror was extenuated along with the shortcomings that had come to light. In literary criticism as in life, twentieth-century idealism had once again made itself complicit in some of the most abhorrent practices known to mankind.

Poems *by Henri Coulette, Carol Rumens, Michael Blumenthal, & Jane Kenyon*

Correspondence

The letter lies unanswered, thus free of lies.
The light all day has travelled the crowded pages,
Shifting the shadows, changing the hue of ink.
The truths, if truths there are, are stationary.

Now night comes on, from your time zone to mine.
The moon is tentative, not wholly herself,
And the owl bells, and the owl's mate bells back,
A dialogue of sorts, question and answer,

The answer being but the question asked.
East of your sleep, deep in the zodiac,
Tomorrow is already chronicled.
Oh, I shall write you what you want to hear.

—*Henri Coulette*

Postscript

There are some questions one should know by heart.
A world without them must be shadowless.
Who was it said, Come let us kiss and part?

The one who asked, Why is this apple tart?
And dreamed the serpent was the letter S?
There are some questions one should know by heart.

It was the thorn that plotted to outsmart
The cunning of the rose with such success.
Who was it said, Come let us kiss and part?

There are interiors none may map or chart:
In your voice, crying, was a wilderness.
There are some questions one should know by heart.

Your ape and echo from the bitter start,
This mirror mourns your image's caress.
Who was it said, Come let us kiss and part?

We had too little craft and too much art.
We thought two noes would make a perfect yes.
There are some questions one should know by heart.
Who was it said, Come let us kiss and part?

—*Henri Coulette*

In Westgate Garden

When I passed them, tucked away
on a bench cut deep into the privet,

I observed two masculine hands at urgent play
on a small, cotton-clad, feminine rib-cage

which seemed content to lie there and accept
the attention, snug and close as a bird in its plumage.

At once your absence swept me, firey-cold,
and something envious and mean and chill

froze to my skin. I thought how, when we shared
our love, I could do better than lie still:

then a sharp rustling shook the dark-leafed bower;
the couple vanished, you sat quietly waiting

for me to notice you, to sense you'd spoken.
"In love, the one possessed has no less power

than the possessor. To accept with grace
is also to give." And then, it seemed, you opened

your arms towards me so consentingly,
I was enfolded in that mystery.

—*Carol Rumens*

Winter solstice, 1983

Blessed is the short day.

—John Berryman

I ponder the complexity of things:
how the sun moves, azimuthal,
through the weave of sky,
how the wintered days deplete
the air of light, how a broken thing
replenishes its scars until its life
becomes an elegy to what it knows.
Last night, I dreamt my way
into a better life: the trees
were lichen to the air, the paths
towards wisdom weren't obtuse,
the words men utter in the haste
of heat did not take years of cold
to utter back. I woke as men wake
all their days—distempered
by the conflict of their ways
and wish, beleaguered by the griefs
that linger through the cold.
But I grow wise at last
remembering the early hurts.
I grow wise in silent ways
which speech absolves. I grow wise
and sift the fallen petals from
the ground, and press their fragrance
to my lips, and speak, and speak, and urge
my days to lengthen forward once again in the good name of light.

—Michael Blumenthal

The visit

The talkative guest has gone,
and we sit in the yard
saying nothing. The slender moon
comes over the peak of the barn.

The air is damp, and dense
with the scent of honeysuckle
The last clever story has been told
and answered with laughter.

With my sleeping self I met
my obligations, but now I am aware
of the silence, and your affection,
and the delicate sadness of dusk.

—*Jane Kenyon*

Sick at summer's end

Today from the darkened room I heard
the men across the lake, taking up the dock
for winter. They stacked the clattering sections
well up the sandy slope, then
shedded the canoes; and I suppose
they left the cabins locked.

Late afternoon the paper carrier's car
slowed on the blacktop, stopped,
and, flinging gravel, started up again.

I know the garden ramps and goes
to seed. And the Blue Jay chills
with its call that sounds like the butcher's
saw when it cuts into bone.
The room turns darker still
by insensible degrees, and crickets
shrill from the window well
I'm falling upward, nothing to hold me down.

—*Jane Kenyon*

November calf

She calved in the ravine, beside
the green-scummed pond.
Full clouds and mist hung low—
it was unseasonably warm. Steam
rose from her head as she pushed
and called; her cries went out
over the still-lush field.

First came the front feet, then
the blossom-nose, shell-pink
and glistening; and then the broad
forehead, flopping black ears,
and neck She worked
until the steaming length of him
rushed out onto the ground, then
turned and licked him with her wide
pink tongue. He lifted up his head
and looked around.

The herd pressed close to see, then
frolicked up the bank, flicking
their tails. It looked like revelry.
The farmer set off for the barn,
swinging in a widening arc
a frayed and knotted length of rope.

—*Jane Kenyon*

MAN RAY

Objects of My Affection

A comprehensive survey of the unique objects,
objects in editions and related photographs



Observatory Time, The Lovers. Photograph, 6¾ x 9 inches.

January 23–February 23

ZABRISKIE

724 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10019

34 page catalogue with essay by Rosalind Krauss available.

Poster of *Venus Restored* published by Zabriskie is available for \$15 ppd.

The minimal and the magical

by Eric Gibson

Joel Shapiro first won attention toward the end of the Seventies with sculptures that “humanized” Minimalism. In his minuscule houses and figures composed of simple lengths of wood, he gave to the elements of pure abstraction a deliberately figurative cast. They thus achieved something rarer than mere formal transformation: they altered the way we look at abstract sculpture. It had been more or less out of the question to see traces of the figurative in abstract works of art; such things were thought to be irrelevant if not demeaning. Yet Shapiro, in his desire to hew to Minimalism’s abstract rigor and extreme reductiveness at the same time that he infused it with a broader outlook, deliberately structured his work to carry strong figurative associations balanced against—and never turning their backs on—their abstract structure. This oscillation between the abstract and the figurative was given greater force by the small compass of the work. One now looks at Shapiro’s elemental geometric configurations without feeling the need to repress the urge to see a “figure” in the work, or chiding oneself for a tendency to anthropomorphize.

Shapiro is clearly possessed of a Minimalist’s eye. Indeed, it could be said that his fundamental loyalty is to the Minimalist idiom. This is evident not only in his compulsion for reductive form but in the importance he places on every nuance governing his sense of line, edge, and mass in relation to the space they occupy. His achievement

in this regard is on the level of Ellsworth Kelly’s, with whom he shares the ability to achieve a sense of amplitude and multiplicity by means of a radical reduction of sculpture’s constituent elements. Each of Shapiro’s works is a feat of compression—visual, material, and intellectual.

Shapiro’s sureness of eye was plainly in evidence in his recent exhibition of new work at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York. His art now seems to have taken a turn in the direction of abstraction: there is an increased emphasis on the material, a more generalized formal language, and a diminution of the suggestive, naturalistic “clues” evident in his earlier sculptures. In his best pieces, this increased abstraction intensifies the work’s emotional charge and its already considerable visual density, the sense it communicates of being far heavier than its miniature size would suggest. (Density has always been one of Shapiro’s most interesting characteristics.) One comes away surprised that there is so much to be seen in sculpture constructed of simple elements.

Most remarkable among Shapiro’s new sculptures—none of them is titled—is a work in which the “figure” appears to be straining upward off the floor, as if executing a choreographic gesture. As usual, while the gesture is specific, the situation is open-ended: we can see that something is happening but we know little about it. Nonetheless, the image is intense, arresting—“torso” arched, “head” thrown back, all available

limbs deployed to support this surge of effort. What separates this sculpture from others is that, by virtue of Shapiro's new economy, enough details have been assimilated into the silhouette so that the bulk and blockiness of the material dominates. This adds an existential dimension to the work: we feel ourselves witnessing a figure struggling to assert itself into the fullness of the world.

In Shapiro's smaller works the results are more problematical. In these a small rectangular piece of wood has affixed to one end of its broadest plane a small, squarish piece of wood, and at the opposite end an even smaller one. Together they suggest a head, feet, and torso. They are placed either vertically, as if standing, or horizontally, as if recumbent. Clearly figurative in concept, these sculptures, in their extreme reductiveness, are Shapiro's most ambitious works to date. He has deliberately allowed his characteristic tension between abstraction and representation to shift, with the result that far more emphasis has been placed on geometry and abstract form than upon anthropomorphic qualities. Indeed, it would be fair to say that in taking his penchant for reductiveness to its furthest point yet, Shapiro has at times come perilously close to crossing the boundary that separates the vital from the inert, the expressive from the mute. With the balance so tipped, we find ourselves resisting the pull of literalness and materiality, trying to hold onto the fleeting figure we see contained within the geometric forms. These sculptures are perhaps too reductive: they forfeit density and thus pathos. They do not seize and make palpable the surrounding space, or even make an issue of their scale: they just happen to be there.

The fact that we now find ourselves, looking at these sculptures, caught up in the kind of quandary I describe gives some indication of the redirection in our visual habits that Shapiro has wrought. Ten years ago there would have been no question but that these wooden blocks were that and that alone. Now all these smaller sculptures have to "carry" them is our knowledge of what

Shapiro has done before and our assumption that he is doing it again here.

Yet there are clues elsewhere in the show that our expectations might in this case be playing us false, for the gallery is dotted with sculptures that have no figurative reference or association whatsoever. One of these is an open-ended, truncated triangle. This miniature form is situated on a broad expanse of floor within which it appears to be the merest physical inflection. In fact it has a presence out of all proportion to its size. Through precise geometry—the sculpture is a right-angle triangle resting on its longer side—Shapiro is able to suggest that we are seeing only part of the whole, the balance of which remains below. Thus he transforms the floor from ritual support to a simple plane passing through a form.

Works such as this cause one to wonder whether Shapiro is in the process of working his way back toward something more closely resembling an orthodox Minimalism. If he is, and if the triangular piece is any guide, he is likely to carry over the reductiveness we have seen so much of, while putting the psychological presence of the more figurative works in the service of abstract formal language.

One comes away from this show with the feeling that one has witnessed an interesting moment of transition, a transition unfolding not with neat inevitability but unevenly, with some of its rougher passages on view. If the result is not all successes, it at least gives us some insight into the eye and mind of one of the most interesting sculptors working today.

At some remove from Joel Shapiro's anxious literalism stands the haunting and evocative work of Romare Bearden, whose new work was recently on view at the Cordier and Ekstrom gallery in New York, in celebration of the artist's seventieth birthday.

Bearden is known primarily for his work as a collagist, in particular for the extended autobiography that has been his principal subject for the last decade. Those who came to this show expecting a continuation of

the collage series received something of a surprise, for in his new work Bearden has turned away from it entirely. He has abandoned the calm, ordered world of retrospection, and the Cubist-derived syntax of the collage form, for an expressionism that addresses itself to subjective experience of another sort, namely the magical, otherworldly realm of the imagination. If the results are not altogether on the level of the earlier, autobiographical works, they are nonetheless fascinating.

Bearden's subject here is Obeah: a mixture of magic and ritual practiced in the West Indies. His approach is synoptic rather than sequential. As if afraid of coming too close to something he cannot control or really understand, he renders only personages and incidents rather than the entire ceremony. In some of these watercolors the brush is used as a pencil, to delineate form in the most abrupt, precise way. Most of them, however, are composed of overlaid washes of pigment within which figures and images are loosely drawn. Hence the figures emerge from and sink back into a lurid, hallucinatory world, a dreamlike space. Here Bearden's change of mediums is crucial. Collage is an art of sharp edges and clearly defined forms, and for Bearden, an art of clearly defined pictorial spaces analogous to those to be found in the world. But the world being depicted in this new work is not ordered, rational, and physical. Thus, a looser, less structured medium is called for, one capable of representing the shifting, uncertain spaces of otherworldly experience.

The best works here are those that come closest to admitting us to the world of magic and superstition. In *Obeah High Priestess* we are given a figure exuding arcane

power. With her elaborate horned headdress and hieratic posture, her green face staring out at us, she clearly exists in a world quite different from that of the rather ordinary figure standing at her side. In *No Wish to Know More* a figure wearing a patterned headdress or halo looms out of a vividly colored, uncertain space, like a figure making a sudden appearance in a dream. The face, strangely quiet and composed, is both mask and natural physiognomy. In *The Obeah's Dawn* a brightly colored airborne rooster and a sun float together in an inky, liquid space, a perfect pictorial representation of the disordered realms of dream experience.

One work, *Marriage of the Viper*, places us in the unusual position of being both witness and participant. Here a woman stands passively to the right, hands folded in front of her, while a brilliant orange snake, coiled around her neck, nuzzles its head beneath the arm of a young woman kneeling at the left. This is perhaps an initiation rite, for the girl is young and nubile, the older woman much plainer. But what is striking is the feeling of witnessing two separate psychological states, each of which embraces us: the detachment of the older woman, who allows the snake to act freely as the agent of this ritual, and the trance-like, subjective abstractedness of the shadowy young girl.

In Bearden's earlier, autobiographical work there had been a strong dream-like quality that could be understood as an evocation of adolescent sensation. In these new works he brings this quality to the fore, not as a vehicle of reminiscence but rather as an instrument to explore an unknown, invisible work. The result is images of visual richness and spiritual unease.

James Weeks

Recent Paintings

12 January–2 February

HIRSCHL & ADLER Modern

851 Madison Avenue New York 212 744-6700

James Coignard

PAINTINGS, WORKS ON PAPER, PRINTS

17th & 18th Century Etchings

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE
INCLUDING PIRANESI AND ISRAEL SILVESTRE

ALEX ROSENBERG GALLERY
TRANSWORLD ART

20 WEST 57 STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10019. 212-757-2700
HOURS: MONDAY-SATURDAY, 10-5:30

A forgotten Golden Age

by E. V. Tham

The name of Christen Købke was, I believe, virtually unknown to most English-speaking art historians and sophisticated amateurs until the arrival recently at London's National Gallery of a small exhibition called "Danish Painting: The Golden Age."¹ Yet Købke is an early nineteenth-century artist of European stature, comparable, in his innate talent and his expression of the ideals of his time, to Constable in England, Corot in France, and George Caleb Bingham in the United States. As recently as 1981 an exhibition at the Royal Academy called "Painting from Nature: The Tradition of Open Air Oil Sketches from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century" not only failed to show the work of Købke or any of his Danish contemporaries, but did not even mention their names in the catalogue.

The achievements of Danish painting, if not widely known, are occasionally noticed. In the recently published volume *Nineteenth Century Art*, Robert Rosenblum reproduces a Købke in color and paintings of two of his contemporaries in black and white; moreover, he discusses their work generously, comparing Købke and Bingham as related

phenomena in widely separate cultures. In the catalogue of the exhibition "American Light, the Luminist Movement," which was presented by the National Gallery in Washington in 1981, Theodore Stebbins discussed several of the Danish painters of the Golden Age in his study of European parallels to the Luminist style. And in 1978, William Gerdts, in his introduction to the catalogue for the "American Luminism" show at New York's Coe Kerr Gallery, mentioned the Danish artists as the Europeans most interested in portraying the clarity of light.

Pride of place for an English-language text on Danish painting's Golden Age, however, must go to a volume by Fritz Novotny, the Austrian art historian. His *Painting and Sculpture in Europe: 1780-1880*, which is part of the Pelican History of Art series, includes a section on what he calls "Danish Biedermeier." At the time it appeared, I thought Novotny's book favored minor European schools at the expense of the great French tradition. It now seems to me a wonderfully balanced account of a complicated century. Since 1960, when Novotny's book appeared, Caspar David Friedrich, the German romantic artist who studied at the Copenhagen Academy, has nearly become a household name to the sophisticated art public, his work having been shown in survey shows of German art and the exhibition of the Dresden collections a few years ago. (Curiously, no American museum yet owns a significant

1 "Danish Painting: The Golden Age" was on view at the National Gallery from September 5 to November 20; it was designed by Robin Kole-Hamilton, the Head of the Design Studio at the museum. *Danish Painting: The Golden Age*, the exhibition's catalogue, was written by Kasper Monrad and published by the National Gallery: 272 pages, £7.99.

GILLIAN AYRES

Recent Paintings

January 5-24

FRANK STELLA

Relief Paintings

January 26-February 23

M. Knoedler & Co.

19 East 70 Street. New York 10021. Telephone (212) 794-0550

oil painting by Friedrich.) Novotny's book, however, was the first general survey to stress Friedrich's central position and to describe his contemporaries and followers accurately. Novotny gives as much attention to J. C. Dahl, Carus, Kersting, Gärtner, Hummel, and Kobell, Germanic small masters of light, mystery, and stillness, as he gives to Ingres, Géricault, Corot, and the Barbizon painters.

It seems clear to us now that a pervasive art tradition took hold in nineteenth-century Europe in the aftermath of the upheavals of revolution and the Napoleonic wars—a kind of small-scale realism charged with naïve poetry and marked by wonderment at the rediscovery of the actual world. This was Biedermeier painting. It found expression particularly in landscape, but it included portraits and genre subjects as well. According to Novotny, "In Danish painting during the first half of the nineteenth century, Biedermeier is purer and more exclusive than anywhere else. It followed immediately after Classicism and was not accompanied by any

Romanticism." In the catalogue for "Danish Painting: The Golden Age" it is stressed that Danish artists, unlike Friedrich and the other Germans, painted what they saw without religious or transcendental aspirations. I am not so sure. Friedrich and his Norwegian disciple Dahl retained close connections with the Danish Academy and with the artists who emerged from it. Many of the Danish paintings of this period are so obsessive in their approach to reality that an atmosphere of mystery and unspoken meanings clings to them.

Although the "Golden Age" exhibition officially begins with the Copley-like precursor Jens Juel and with one painting by the fascinating, Fuseli-like artist Abildgaard, it only really gets underway with C. W. Eckersberg. Eckersberg was a pupil of Jacques-Louis David's in Paris; later, he lived in Rome, where, earlier than Corot, he painted on-the-site oil sketches showing a contemporary, matter-of-fact approach to ancient monuments and a virtuoso handling of light. Upon his return to Denmark, Eckers-

berg became a leading professor at the distinguished Academy of Art in Copenhagen and the father figure for most of the artists of the "Golden Age." The Eckersberg paintings in the London exhibition reveal a worthy and solid provincial artist whose portraits and later seascapes are delightful but by no means infused with genius. The same, I am afraid, must be said of nearly all the charming pupils of Eckersberg included in the "Golden Age" exhibition: C. A. Jensen, the so-called "Danish Frans Hals," whose small portraits, with their loose brushwork, are certainly a cut above average; Constantin Hansen, whose most famous work, a group portrait of Danish artists in Rome, is something of a disappointment; and Wilhelm Bendz, whose most accomplished Biedermeier painting, *Two Brothers in an Interior*, is unfortunately not included in this exhibition.

The great exception is K  bke. Here is a real painter! Novotny's text refers to the "Age of K  bke" rather than to a "Golden Age." K  bke painted small, loosely brushed, informal landscape sketches    la Constable, as well as tender, sharply lighted, highly finished genre subjects as beguiling to the eye as early Winslow Homer. His portrait of the artist S  dring is one of the best portraits of the century, comparable in its intensity, mystery, blazing light, and intriguing still-life "props" to Degas' celebrated small portrait of an artist with a doll in the Gulbenkian Collection. K  bke left for Italy toward the end of his short career rather than at the beginning, as was customary; in his case, the

experience caused deterioration rather than improvement. He died, back in Denmark, in that fateful year of 1848, at the age of thirty-seven. He had painted near Naples many sunny, blue-skied, largish picturesque views of ruins that only occasionally hint at the magic of his Danish subjects.

The "Golden Age" exhibition, so refreshingly different from our idea of the museum blockbuster, would probably not attract a good enough "box-office" for American museums. In London, however, it was generally well attended and it received excellent critical coverage. It was drawn entirely from the resources of the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen and therefore was less comprehensive than it might have been had it also included works from the Hirschsprung Collection and the Glyptotek. Nevertheless, "Danish Painting: The Golden Age" was an excellent idea for an exchange between national collections. It was also the first exhibition to be shown in the newly created and modestly sized special exhibition galleries within London's National Gallery.

While I am often impatient with the torments of revisionism against which we swim these days, struggling constantly to reach a familiar shore, I still consider that one can stay afloat by holding firm to a sense of quality. After wondering sadly about the fashionable claims for Alma-Tadema, Lord Leighton, Bouguereau, and Bierstadt, I feel that a small sideward glance at Danish art of the Golden Age is not unrewarding. Some of it is the real thing.

Theater

Making Whoopi

by Mimi Kramer

To the audience for Whoopi Goldberg's one-woman show at the Lyceum Theater: a word of advice about how to create a standing ovation when you don't really mean it.

First, it is very difficult to start a standing ovation of any sort from the back row of an auditorium. The mechanics are simple: most people stand up in a theater in order to see over the heads of the people who have stood up in front of them. Gazing fixedly at a solid wall of unfamiliar backs makes most people feel short and faintly imbecilic. Standing up is much more fun and, in addition, enables you to see what's going on onstage. If you try to create a standing ovation from anywhere near the back of the theater, however, the rest of the audience will just sit there and jeer at you. If you are sitting toward the back of the theater and feel that you would like to participate in a standing ovation, it is best to try and get word to someone in the third row during intermission.

Now when you try to create a standing ovation, what you are trying to register is a spontaneous expression of unmixed approval. You are trying to get across the idea that you thought it was a good performance. Leaning forward in your seat, placing your program or handbag neatly on the floor in front of you, glancing furtively around to see how other people are reacting and slowly getting to your feet do not convey spontaneity. You want to *surge* to your feet. Try it: try *surging*. Ideally the contents of your lap should hit the floor with a resounding slap

apparently unheeded. You might practice this exercise several times in your own living room if you plan to be much in the company of artists whose work you cannot respect as much as you would like to.

Finally, few things in a theater are more humiliating for all concerned than the phenomenon of the failed ovation. If you do not feel the enthusiasm you profess and are yourself an indifferent actor, you might do well to keep your seat—and your guilt. Honest thanks are better than insincere acclaim: at least they express appreciation for the performer.

The performance I really wanted to stand up for recently was Alec McCowan's in *Kipling*. Not because *Kipling* was particularly great theater or even a good play: it wasn't. I wanted to stand for a whole slew of reasons: because it was a fine performance; because actors like Alec McCowan are getting rarer; because no one ever mentioned (lo those many years ago) that when Alec McCowan replaced Alan Bates in Simon Gray's *Butley* his performance surpassed that of the role-creating star. I wanted to stand because of Lucio in *Measure for Measure*, Trinculo in *The Tempest*, Cusins in *Major Barbara*, Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Kulygin in *Three Sisters* and Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi*—all of whom peopled my childhood in Alec McCowan's voice on those wonderful Spoken Arts recordings that Caedmon used to make.

I wanted to stand, also, because I think

producers are owed some measure of gratitude who, like Ray Smolyo and Arthur Cantor, encourage “backers” to channel their tax write-offs into productions like *Kipling* and Ian McKellan’s *Acting Shakespeare* which appeared on Broadway last year. They must be tax write-offs because they can’t possibly yield much profit, these one-man shows—or even make for a very wild opening-night party. In a sense, I suppose, I wanted to stand on behalf of my eighth-graders who got more out of Ian McKellan’s *Acting Shakespeare* than most of them will probably get from a term of college-level English. Unfortunately, Alec McCowan did not even take a curtain call—or perhaps fortunately, rather. Even in the balcony, I probably would have leapt to my feet and been left feeling foolish as well as insincere.

The strength of *Acting Shakespeare* had been the unexpected ways in which it had transcended the routine functions of its goal: to offer a reading of Shakespeare’s world view translated into theater. Now true sophisticates may have noticed that *Acting Shakespeare* really amounted to little more than a parboiled version of Marchette Chute’s 1949 biography chopped up with choice morsels from the Folios. And ill-natured critics might justifiably point out that McKellan has little that is new to offer in the way of literary criticism. But literary criticism is not Ian McKellan’s forte or profession. Rather, what he has (in addition to being one of the finest actors that the post-war generation in Britain has produced) is an ability to function brilliantly at that axis where acting, directing, and teaching virtually become one. Loving and understanding the preoccupations and vision of a particular author as he does, McKellan managed to transmit to the audience an uncommon passion for Shakespeare and an uncommon sense of what Shakespeare is all about, making both a little more common.

Alec McCowan clearly loves Rudyard Kipling. Alas, Brian Clark, whom McCowan commissioned to write the show, does not; and the real trouble with *Kipling* was Brian Clark’s discomfort over Kipling

himself as an ideological embarrassment. McCowan’s purpose, like McKellan’s in *Acting Shakespeare*, was to transmit to audiences some share of the love and appreciation that he feels for an author dear to his heart. Now Kipling isn’t Shakespeare—he was no literary giant. But he did write some nice stories and some of the best doggerel there is, all of which—as McCowan’s performance suggested—could easily have been transposed into an evening of enjoyable theater. But McCowan’s point as it seemed to glimmer through the murky mists of Clark’s apology, was that there was politically more to Kipling than we usually give him credit for—more than racism, imperialism, and white supremacism.

Exactly what the something more was we never found out, for Brian Clark—with the same probity that made his *Whose Life Is It, Anyway?* such a snore—is too busy misrepresenting Kipling to really examine him. Kipling, of course, *was* a racist and an imperialist. He really believed in “the white man’s burden.” Now you can either confront the fact that Kipling held objectionable views, or you can try to place them in the context of his life and background and try to engender a fuller understanding of those views than is widely or normally held. But what good does it do to lie? To pretend that things were other than they were? To put together a theatrical evening of Kipling’s work in which that poem is not even mentioned except to the extent that the phrase “Take up the white man’s burden . . .” flits by us once or twice in a medley of great first lines? You can, I think, suggest in an American theater in the 1980s that so benighted a character as Kipling might have had something to say. You can, I think, present before an audience of New York Jewish liberals even as reactionary an idea as that in creating a middle class in India the British might have been doing something worthwhile. (New York liberals are really all for the middle class, *au fond*—unlike their counterparts in London.) What you cannot do in a New York theater is introduce a poem like “Gunga Din” with a remark like,

The Art Students League of New York

215 W. 57th St., N.Y.C. 10019
(212) Circle 7-4510

Founded 1875

R. A. Florio, Executive Director

The 110th Regular Session continues through May 25, 1985.

Students may register for classes at any time. Tuition is by the month. No entrance requirements. The League is an art school in the atelier tradition. Part-time as well as full-time registration. Individual instruction. Life Models in most classes.

Life Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Figure Composition, Abstract Art, Graphics (Etching, Engraving, Lithography, Woodcut), Portrait Painting, Landscape, A.M., P.M., Late P.M. and Evening Classes. Saturday classes for children and adults. One and Two Evening a Week Classes.

Evening lectures on all kinds of subjects of interest to artists. Sixty-six instructors to choose from. They represent different styles and tendencies in the current art scene. Write or telephone for illustrated catalogue showing work by instructors and by students.

"Everyone thinks that I was a racist, but I wasn't a racist: Listen to this one . . ." Brian Clark's script for *Kipling* offered New York audiences less an honest and accurate portrait of either the man or his work than a firsthand glimpse at the logical contortions by which a certain kind of British "liberalism" attempts to reconcile antique cultural preferences with up-to-the-minute ideology.

If Alec McCowan's one-man show on Broadway suffered from fear of offering offense to a white, upper-middle-class audience, so did Whoopi Goldberg's—or so her curtain speech implied. Gesturing to the four or five clusters of people on their feet to sit down (and ignoring those who were on their feet and moving toward the door), she thanked the audience prettily, in the name of all black actors and performers, for their support, noting that it gave the lie to the many people who had warned her "that Broadway was not ready for" a show like hers. Unprofessional though a curtain speech may be, Miss Goldberg's is intriguing. It

must, surely, be part of the performance; for to judge by the content of Whoopi Goldberg's material I would say that Broadway was exactly the place for her.

Whoopi Goldberg's one-woman show at the Lyceum Theatre is a little like a cabaret-style dramatization of *The New York Times's* "Ten Neediest Cases" at Christmastime, a sort of latter-day version of "Living Newspaper" theater. Hers is unquestionably a gift for inspiring compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves. The show, which is partly improvisational, consists of six "sketches" or routines in which Miss Goldberg impersonates a character and tells a story. In the course of the evening she becomes, successively, a junkie named Fontaine, a California surfer girl, a hideously deformed cripple, a West Indian housekeeper, a Bowery bum, and a little girl who wishes she were white. There are no sets, no costumes: Miss Goldberg stands on a masked, empty stage and changes character literally by changing her hat.

Some of her impersonations are extraor-

dinary: so accurately does she assume the voice and mannerisms of her characters—the junkie’s jittery walk and dangling hand migrating crotchward, the Valley Girl’s breathy babble and damp mop of hair, the old man’s toothless sagacity—that, except where the weakness of her narrative lets her down, it is possible to forget that Whoopi Goldberg is not who she is pretending to be.

Some routines are better than others. Best are her set pieces: the Valley Girl and the cripple, with beginning and middle and end. The Valley-Girl sketch is as biting a piece of social satire as any I have recently seen. As the story of a casual romantic encounter turns into a grizzly shock-horror story about abortion, what began as a send-up of speech mannerisms (“So I say okay, so he says okay, so we say okay. Okay?”) becomes an attempt to indict a whole outlook. And although the routine takes a few swipes at institutions (family, the church) the butt of Miss Goldberg’s joke is ultimately the girl herself. She continues to make us laugh as she fends off the priest (“He goes, ‘You’re a sinner!’ I go, ‘No, I’m a surfer!’”) and the nun (“I mean she’s like totally married to this guy she never sees!”) but the presiding irony is sad, lodged as it is in the girl’s bright chatter, so inappropriate to the story she is telling. Essentially, though, Miss Goldberg’s purpose is to preach: and her lessons—“Normal is in the eye of the beholder”; We should all love each other and hold hands; Be yourself—seem scarcely likely to shock, especially in a Broadway theater.

Engaging though Whoopi Goldberg’s impersonations are, the real show at the Lyceum Theatre is the one going on in the audience. They are weeping and dying of laughter. As the Trojans and Carthaginians vied with one another in applauding the graces of Dido’s palace-bard, so the members of Whoopi Goldberg’s audience literally vie with one another in their anxiety to make their appreciation of Whoopi Goldberg known. They rock with laughter when she utters the syllables “Muh-fuh” to show that they are streetwise. They gasp and moan

and whimper ostentatiously into their handkerchiefs affecting a total obliviousness to everything but the figure onstage while the energy in the auditorium created by the build-up of peripheral vision working overtime is almost palpable.

Some part of the audience’s active involvement has been solicited by Miss Goldberg’s opening routine which establishes a pattern of call and response between actor and spectators. In the person of the junkie, Fontaine, Miss Goldberg boogies out onstage as the lights are coming up. “Wass hapnin, man?” she crows and nobody moves. Fontaine becomes fractious and gives the audience to understand that when he asks “Wass hapnin?” he expects a response, by God! “We’ll try it again,” Fontaine decrees. The audience is in transports of delight, the theater alive with the rustle of people trying to look sharp and clearing their throats mentally. Whoopi re-enters: “Wass hapnin, man?” she crows. And suddenly we are in the middle of the chariot race in *Ben-Hur* as voices bump against each other and jostle one another out of the way in the mad rush to prove themselves informal and unafraid. The whole evening becomes a vocal contest on the part of the audience to see who can most uninhibitedly, with greatest volume and celerity, answer Whoopi’s questions and shed the stigma of white, uptown, and uptight. Sometimes the audience’s zeal exceeds even the actress’s requirements and voices call out completely uninvited from the depths of the theater. At one point late in the show, one of Miss Goldberg’s characters in mid-monologue was reasoning, “... I mean, I can be beautiful...” when a man’s voice, interrupting her, called out spasmodically, “Yes! You can! Sure!” into a stunned silence. (I don’t think I’ve ever been so embarrassed in a theater. Not even that time at camp when I was eight years old and my skirt fell off onstage.) Even Whoopi looked taken aback.

To a man, each member of the audience at the Lyceum Theatre is out to prove that he or she is Whoopi’s biggest fan. And a fat lot of good it does them. For the second half of Whoopi Goldberg’s one-woman show de-

generates into a sadomasochistic free-for-all with Whoopi holding the whip. Her first sketch of the evening had established a sort of nonaggression pact with the audience, telling, in the voice of Fontaine, a story about a trip to Europe and in particular a visit to Amsterdam and the house of Anne Frank. The anecdote is pointless and digressive in terms of the actual routine itself: it has nothing to do with the character of the drug addict, in fact, it actually forces Whoopi Goldberg out of character once or twice so that she speaks half in her own voice and half in the voice of the addict. The punchline, which takes about ten minutes to deliver, has Fontaine the junkie standing in the middle of the Frank attic ("The room where they all hid, man!") and finding himself apparently moved beyond the power of words to express by the specter of suffering inflicted on and endured by this courageous girl. Fontaine grows positively misty-eyed when he talks of coming upon a placard bearing on it that last famous entry in Anne Frank's diary.

Now, I am being perversely obtuse here. Of course the person whose pilgrimage to Amsterdam and Anne Frank's house we are to understand moved her to tears is not Fontaine the junkie, but Whoopi Goldberg the real person. But the whole anecdote and its incorporation into the junkie routine are part of a system of purpose and cause. It frightens the audience and then reassures them—like a child who first tortures a puppy in order to have the pleasure of comforting it. To an audience in New York, where conversations about which race has a greater monopoly on suffering—the blacks or the Jews?—are an integral part of family life and entertaining, like Tupperware, the message is clear. "You win," says Whoopi Goldberg to her white, Jewish audience. "Now we can be friends because I see the world your way." And since from the moment the name of Anne Frank was heard in the ghetto accents of the junkie the audience has been braced for a confrontation, they are gratefully relieved. The whole routine acts like a promise, a way of saying,

"You don't have to be afraid of me anymore. Don't worry, I'm not going to make you uncomfortable at the theater."

One can actually feel the audience relaxing and letting down their defenses during that first sketch. In Act II, however, the pact is broken. The West Indian housekeeper, for instance, puts the audience in a bind. They cannot laugh so vigorously here without giving away their own upper-middle-class status. In showing appreciation for how good Whoopi Goldberg's Kingston accent is (actually, it's not very good) they will be proving that they all have housekeepers from Jamaica themselves. (Where else, after all, would they become familiar with the mannerisms in question?) The old black man is a reminder of the derelicts one passes every day on the street and averts one's eyes from. The little girl, heedless of that untimely voice from the audience, flits offstage insouciantly, hoping that she can *become* white, a sentiment that leaves behind the specter of some rude awakening. But the audience has already suffered their own rude awakening having discovered that, for all her friendly overtures, Whoopi Goldberg has humiliated them.

In the last routine but one Whoopi Goldberg approaches a man in the front row of the audience and holds out her hand. In the voice and persona of the derelict, "Gimme a quarter," she says. There is a pause as the audience waits to see what the man will do. He hesitates: does she really mean it? "Gimme a quarter," she repeats with just the insistence and indignation of an old panhandler having to ask a second time. The man reaches into his pocket, pulls out a quarter, and gives it to her. So convincing is her impersonation that he hands her the quarter as he would hand money to a beggar—gingerly. She pounces. You're afraid to touch me, she says accusingly in the voice of a canny old man. Are you afraid to touch me? The man denies it emphatically. For proof, she makes him grasp or touch her hand and give her the quarter again, properly this time. For the man in question, the experience must be unpleasant; for the rest

of the audience it is extraordinary. One half of you really believes that the person on stage is an old bum who used to dance with the minstrel shows. When he tells his story you feel for him and you hear the strains of "Mr. Bojangles" ringing in your ears. The other half of you knows that it is really Whoopi Goldberg up there onstage and that the whole point of the routine is to put some poor sucker from the audience on the spot.

Whoopi Goldberg goes down the entire front row of the theater stopping at every third or fourth person. Four or five times she does the quarter bit. Her subsequent victims are luckier; they know now what to avoid. Some of them proffer their quarters with surprising speed; all of them offer to shake her hand; one of them looked like she wanted to break it. This part of Whoopi Goldberg's act is interesting for more than the fact that she walks off with a dollar.

The forms of theater which require audience participation are, with very few exceptions, fundamentally sadistic. For one thing, they are infantilizing. For another, they rely on breaking down the conventional barrier that separates performer from spectator. That barrier is a protection no less for the actor than for the spectator who, after all, has come to the theater in order to witness a spectacle, not to become one. Different kinds of theater make use of the sadistic aspect of enforced audience participation for a variety of allegedly social and political purposes: to let the theatergoer in on the secret that he is not safe. The theatergoer has no choice (unless he wanted to participate in any case): he must be humiliated either by joining in against his will or by refusing to and drawing even more attention to himself.

When she gets to the end of the row Whoopi Goldberg starts back again and

attacks some person she missed on the trip over. She orders the person to take her hand and then to take the hand of the person next to him, repeating her instructions and her philosophy until the whole row is joined in life-giving brotherhood. Then she makes one person in that row join hands with someone from the row behind and so on until the entire audience has linked hands. Never have I felt so fortunate in my location in a theater: I had the very last seat in the house. Elsewhere in her show Whoopi Goldberg has sought physical contact with the audience. Interestingly, on the night I went to see her only one member of the audience had the self-respect to refuse her overture: the black woman who refused to let Whoopi Goldberg touch her hair. I wonder whether I would have gotten away with that.

Throughout the first half of the evening Whoopi Goldberg keeps extending invitations to the audience. Drop by when you're on the beach, says the Valley Girl; come to my wedding if you're in town, says the cripple. The entire opening sketch—with its I-know-where-you're-coming-from message—is an invitation to the audience to get down and get hip. But my reading of Whoopi Goldberg's show is that she is inviting the audience to get something a bit more guttural than "hip." She asks her audience to be used and humiliated, and they comply.

No wonder the audience looked unhappy that night on their way out of the theater; no wonder the attempts at a standing ovation had proved ambivalent and halfhearted. Can you blame the audience? Actually, I think you can. The most interesting aspect of the evening was that I came away from the Lyceum feeling that I liked Whoopi Goldberg a whole lot more than I liked her audience. Given the crassness of their performance, in fact, I reckon they got what they deserved.

The Eliot riddle

by Bruce Bawer

Of all the English-language writers of the twentieth century, only William Faulkner (if the *MLA Bibliography* can be trusted) regularly commands more scholarly attention these days than Thomas Stearns Eliot. Every four days or so, on average, a scholar somewhere in the world adds a new monograph, dissertation, or essay on Eliot to his *curriculum vitae*. All the more peculiar, then, that it has taken twenty years (Eliot died on January 4, 1965) for someone to come out with an honest-to-goodness biography of the century's most celebrated poet and critic. There have, to be sure, been three widely admired (or at least widely read) pseudo-biographies of the man from St. Louis, the titles of which suggest an odd humility—or cautiousness?—on the part of their authors. Herbert Howarth's book is called *Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot* (1965); T. S. Matthews's is *Great Tom: Notes Towards the Definition of T. S. Eliot* (1974); Robert Sencourt's posthumous contribution is *T. S. Eliot: A Memoir* (1971). "Notes," "memoirs"—it's as if everyone has agreed that no single individual could hope to give us anything more than bits and pieces of the Old Possum; or perhaps it is simply that no one has been willing to take upon himself the awesome responsibility of defining Eliot for posterity. What these pseudo-biographers choose to do, instead of attempting a definitive biography, is to collect what facts they can (not an easy task, considering the multitude of restrictions placed on access and

publication rights to various materials by the Eliot estate) and marshal them, quite frankly, according to their own prejudices. In short: to each his own Eliot.

Howarth, for example, devotes himself to cataloguing the people, places, things, and concepts that influenced the poet. Not a bad idea. But he goes overboard, with the result that we learn a good deal more from him about the history of St. Louis (and other such esoterica) than about T. S. Eliot. The poet emerges from this study not as a human being but as a mere amalgam of influences, a product in a mathematical equation. If Howarth is unduly mechanistic, Sencourt leans uncomfortably in the direction of hagiography. To him, Eliot is above all a man who abandoned the Unitarian religion of his birth (a denomination for which Sencourt does not trouble to disguise his lack of respect), only to find his way back to God in middle age and become one of the "spiritual leaders of Europe" (no kidding). The structure of *T. S. Eliot: A Memoir* is reminiscent of *A Moveable Feast*, and Sencourt's intention, like Hemingway's, is not so much to tell a story as to paint a picture—a picture, in this case, of a supremely virtuous, exceptionally amiable man with plenty of friends, a terrific sense of humor, and a profound commitment to God. Sencourt (who, like Eliot, was an enthusiastic convert to British citizenship and the Anglican church) succeeds better than any writer in helping us to understand why Eliot became a "royalist in

politics" and an "Anglo-Catholic in religion," but his opinion of any given Eliot poem is too narrowly determined by his own religious convictions, and his reading of Eliot's life is altogether too partisan (he refuses, for instance, to see anything but the noblest of motives behind the poet's abandonment of his first wife, Vivien). Affording a sharp contrast to Sencourt's serene sycophancy is Matthews, whose irreverence toward his subject is refreshing ("On a dull day, Eliot could out-dreary and out-pedant the dreariest and most pedantic academic"), and who, in some of his anecdotes, brings Eliot to life in a way Howarth and Sencourt don't. Matthews's Eliot, rather than the chummy churchman Sencourt claims to have known, is the Eliot most of us are familiar with—formal, distant, often pompous; to Matthews, the key to this man's character (as well as to his poetry) is his supposed "*horror feminae*," the result, Matthews suggests, of having been brought up in a straitlaced Victorian home where "sex and sin were the same thing." It was Eliot's perverse guilt over his perfectly normal sexual desires, Matthews contends, that determined the course of his life—that brought into being poems like "Prufrock" and "The Waste Land," that made him hide behind that improperly proper façade, and that ultimately drove him into the arms of the English church. This is certainly a very defensible argument, but Matthews doesn't defend it particularly well; if Howarth is too scholarly, Matthews is too cocky, refusing to substantiate assertions the truth of which he apparently considers to be self-evident.

Peter Ackroyd's *T. S. Eliot: A Life*¹ is in every way an improvement over these books. Denied access to Eliot's private papers, and refused permission even to quote from those Eliot letters that he was able to locate in the libraries of the world, Ackroyd has nonetheless produced a book that—while not without serious flaws—is unquestionably a *biography*. Not the least of the problems facing

a biographer of Eliot is that the man was something of an enigma even to those who knew him most intimately. Ackroyd has faced this situation honestly, placing his emphasis on Eliot the *poseur*, the role-player, the "master of disguise or protective camouflage—an 'upper-middle' Englishman with his publishing colleagues, a Yankee with Yankees and indeed a pillar of the Church with other such pillars." Ackroyd spends a lot of time simply supporting the proposition that the Eliot most people knew—the dignified, proper London gentleman—was not the *real* Eliot, but only a face prepared to meet the faces that he met. Ackroyd quotes Edmund Wilson: "[Eliot] is an actor He gives you the creeps a little at first because he is such a completely artificial, or, rather, self-invented character . . . but he has done such a perfect job with himself that you end up by admiring him." V. S. Pritchett: "[Eliot is] a company of actors inside one suit, each twitting the others" Eliot was not, of course, the first modern poet to play a part. To many of the *symbolistes*, and to the aesthetes of the 1890s, a pose was *de rigueur*; and the same is true of many of Eliot's contemporaries. Ezra Pound dressed up as a Provençal troubadour, and in his letters played the country bumpkin; H. D., for her part, liked to pretend that she was an ancient Greek. The difference with Eliot is that he carried off his pose with greater expertise and seriousness than his compeers. For role-playing was more than a game to him; it was—like classicism, royalism, and Anglo-Catholicism—a means of imposing order upon an existence at the center of which he could only find "the Void."

Ackroyd, forced to rely more heavily than other biographers on the biographies and diaries of his subject's friends, manages to put together the most complete, coherent picture yet of the surface Eliot, the Eliot people knew. When he tries to get beneath the surface, however—to understand why Eliot felt such a need to create a persona—Ackroyd stumbles. Perhaps the least effective part of *T. S. Eliot: A Life* is the section devoted to Eliot's childhood in St. Louis, in

1 *T. S. Eliot: A Life*, by Peter Ackroyd; Simon & Schuster, 400 pages, \$24.95.

cordier & ekstrom
417 east 75 st.
n.y. city

SANDRA MACKINTOSH

WOOD FIGURES • JAN. 5-FEB. 2

which Ackroyd attributes the poet's escape from America, and his subsequent metamorphosis into that detached "upper-middle" Englishman, to the socioeconomic situation in turn-of-the-century St. Louis. Eliot, Ackroyd tells us,

grew up in a time of great ethical and social confusion—the intercontinental [sic] railways were changing the shape of the country, just as the vast tide of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe was radically reforming the idea of what an "American" was. This was a society which offered no living or coherent tradition, a society being created by industrialists and bankers, and by the politics and the religion which ministered to them. For those who feel themselves to be set apart, and who have found in their reading of literature a sense of life and of values not available to them in their ordinary lives, there is a terrible emptiness about such a country at such a time.

This, in a nutshell, is Ackroyd's explanation of why Eliot took it on the lam to England,

and it simply doesn't convince. The transcontinental railroads? They'd already done their part in changing the American way of life by the time Eliot was born in 1888. Immigrants from southern and eastern Europe? Most of them didn't go anywhere near St. Louis; rather, they settled in the Northeast, the home turf of poets like William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, and Robert Frost—none of whom found it necessary to evacuate their country for good. Industrialists and bankers? Does Ackroyd really think that they were more influential in St. Louis than in the city Eliot escaped to—London, which was then the financial capital of the world (and where Eliot ended up working contentedly at Lloyds)? As for America's lack of a "living or coherent tradition," Eliot grew up in an environment that, if anything, had *too much* of a sense of tradition. The Eliots were one of those old, rather ridiculously vain New England families that make a point of knowing (and advertising) their ancestry, all the way back to William the Conqueror. It seems to me

that the key to Eliot's metamorphosis into that frosty "upper-middle" Anglican monarchist has less to do with railroads, immigrants, industrialists, and bankers than with the snobbish self-importance he learned at his mother's knee.

Ackroyd's main weakness in the pages of the book dealing with these early years in St. Louis is his extremely provincial perspective. He is very much an Englishman, and his book is clearly tailored to an English audience; he persistently defines American phenomena in British terms (he describes Eliot's mother, for instance, as "a Fabian of American life") and employs English idioms to an almost aggressive degree. More seriously, his familiarity with, understanding of, and respect for American civilization and culture are not all that one could hope for (his major experience of America seems to be a Mellon Fellowship at Yale, hardly the best route to an appreciation of American folkways). He is, I'm afraid, a bit too easily convinced that the United States, at least in the early years of the century, was no place for a writer; to him, patently, poor Eliot simply *had* to go to London to find literary and intellectual life on a level worthy of his gifts.

Ackroyd's simplistic and condescending view of the colonies manifests itself over and over in this book—in his oft-repeated (though unsupported) description of turn-of-the-century American civilization as "inchoate"; in his patronizing reference to "that clean-cut listlessness which is characteristic of young and well-bred Americans" (Yalies?); and in his smug assertion that Americans have a puerile passion for "cross-cultural references on a gigantic scale." One hesitates, in the face of such caricatures, to resort to stereotypes oneself, but certainly no one but a good old-fashioned Oxbridgean (Ackroyd is a graduate of Cambridge University) could describe Harvard—especially the early twentieth-century Harvard of Santayana, Irving Babbitt, and George Lyman Kittredge—as paying "obeisance to the egalitarian and industrial culture" of America.

Not all of the problems with *T. S. Eliot: A Life*, however, are related to the author's insularity. The book's sloppy, unsparkling style is reminiscent of another British literary man's biography of an American writer: John Haffenden's *The Life of John Berryman*. Like Haffenden's book, Ackroyd's is all too frequently journalistic in the worst sense of the word: hurried, repetitious, inexact. There are pages on which nearly every sentence is footnoted (one sentence contains no fewer than five footnotes), and there are passages where Ackroyd is continually qualifying or elaborating within parentheses—an irritating tic. What's more, his prose can be terribly clumsy. Speaking of Eliot's admiration for the anti-Semitic "philosopher" Charles Maurras, who encouraged student riots in France, Ackroyd observes: "Here we have the excitement of the timid or hesitant man watching the violence of others (Eliot liked boxing matches also), just as his thirst for absolutism found nourishment in Maurrasien doctrines." Elsewhere Ackroyd proclaims: "[Eliot's] dress and demeanor were indeed now of the English type, and on occasions he went to theatrical lengths to proclaim himself one." Tense shifts and dangling modifiers abound, and one even comes across classically comic problems with pronoun reference: "Eliot's father died at the beginning of January, 1919; Vivien wrote in her diary that it was a terrible ordeal for him." Finally, Ackroyd has a habit of constructing sentences so that they require the use of the word *which*—preferably several times: "He was too intelligent not to realize the effect which he had upon others—that slightly chilling and aloof quality of which we have read descriptions—and this was one way in which he mitigated it."

Some of the book's failings, of course, are not Ackroyd's fault. The rules laid down by the Eliot estate make it necessary for him to paraphrase Eliot's lectures and letters (this is not something he is particularly good at), with the result that the sound of Eliot's voice is almost entirely missing from the book—a serious deficiency. The poet is

simply not as much of a presence in this book as he should be. Moreover, the unavailability of primary source material relating to certain periods of Eliot's life obliges Ackroyd to turn the book, for pages at a time, into a calendar of Eliot's lecture engagements. He is especially unrevealing on the subject of the eight-year-long second marriage, which by most accounts brought Eliot the happiness that had eluded him throughout his adult life, and which (according to some authorities) shook up his misanthropic opinions and broke him of role-playing. Ackroyd offers nothing new about this crucial period—indeed, he offers hardly anything at all, the closing chapter (wherein Eliot's final four years get a mere four pages) amounting essentially to a chronicle of the travels, public appearances, and honors that marked Eliot's last decade. *T. S. Eliot: A Life*, sad to say, ends not with a bang but with a whimper.

Ackroyd is better, however, when he leaves off biography for the moment to engage in literary criticism. He is a gifted critic, and at his most interesting when he lays out the connections between Eliot's life and his writings. In both realms, as Ackroyd points out, Eliot was an inveterate copier, a man who needed models, a writer whose genius, in both poetry and criticism, was a "genius for organization." In his literary essays, "what Eliot provided . . . was a certainty of judgment combined with an ability so to arrange various literary texts that they seem to form a coherent order among themselves. So it is that in one paragraph he mentions Elizabethan blank verse, Milton, Spenser, Pope and Dryden—and makes sense of them in terms of their relationship to each other. Classification and comparison are his devices . . ." So it is in his poetry. If Eliot's poems sometimes read like anthologies of other poets' best lines, it is because "it was only in response to other poetry that Eliot could express his own deepest feelings." Whether quoting lines from Thomas Kyd and Gérard de Nerval in *The Waste Land*, or borrowing from Dante and Cavalcanti in

"Ash Wednesday," Eliot "needed the model before he could explicate his own experience . . . he did not imitate the previous work; he used it as a rough sketch which helped him to order and to understand his own experience." His was "an imagination which received with full force the impression of other writers' forms and language, and which was then able to assimilate them within an original design."

As with the poet, so with the man. It was at Harvard that Eliot discovered, in the pages of Arthur Symonds's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, the story of Jules Laforgue. In Laforgue, Eliot found not only "a temperament very close to his own," but a model for both his poetry and his persona. Laforgue was "reticent, scrupulous, correct both in dress and manner, confronting the world with a posed demeanour that he never abandoned. He was a poet 'terribly conscious of daily life' and the 'possibilities of art which come from the sickly modern being, with his clothes, his nerves.'" In Laforgue, as Ackroyd observes, the shy, self-conscious young man discovered the prototype for his London-gentleman role. But here again, Ackroyd seems to misread the situation somewhat. Eliot, he writes,

was attracted primarily to the denial of conventional feeling in that poetry, both in its ironic scepticism about romantic passion and Laforgue's refusal to reveal or even to take seriously his own. Eliot had already appeared to his more percipient contemporaries as something of a wit and an actor, someone who, in other words, understood the artificiality of feeling; but he was also extraordinarily intelligent. He saw through everything, as very clever young men often do, and he was quite unable to be serious about those matters which other people took more solemnly. Now, in Laforgue, he discovered a tone and a formal technique which allowed these characteristics of his own temperament to be expressed.

One balks at this. Is it that the young Eliot "understood the artificiality of feeling" or that he feared its reality? If he was "unable

January

Pat Steir

Major Prints & Drawings

in the Small Print room:

John Taylor Arms

Dolan/Maxwell Gallery

1701 Walnut Street Philadelphia

215 665-1701

to be serious" about certain matters, was it because he saw through them, or because they frightened him? Are the "scepticism and weariness" that crept so easily from Laforgue's poetry into his own the manifestation of a failure to be impressed by human emotions or a defense against them? Ackroyd notes that illness "often descended upon [Eliot] at points of crisis," and describes in turn (without commenting on the fact that this is a major, and hardly admirable, pattern in Eliot's life) how Eliot chose to sneak away from his family in America, from his first marriage, and from his eleven-year-long monklike cohabitation with John Hayward, rather than face the parties involved in a mature and considerate manner. Certainly this evidence (you don't even have to bring in "Prufrock") suggests a sensibility that is less bored by life than it is frightened by it.

If one mentions Laforgue, one must also take account of Henry James. Ackroyd notes that Eliot intended, as a young man, to model his literary approach on that of the

Master (he wanted, in his poetry, "to depict externals, to anatomize social life by a process of selection and concentration"). But Ackroyd might also have noted—and he doesn't—the incontrovertible resemblance between Eliot's "upper-middle" Englishman and the Anglicized James. It was during the decade or so between the desertion of his wife Vivien and his marriage to Valerie Fletcher that Eliot's Jamesianism underwent its major phase. Throughout this period, Eliot passed much of his time in great country houses with titled English folk; was conspicuously chaste, fastidious, avuncular, voyeuristic, detached; was the living symbol of the sense of the past, the love of order, the cultivation of manners, and a certain restrained, yet devastating, authoritative-ness; and was a man (as Ackroyd puts it) "in whom the instinct to conform and the instinct to stand apart merged in a subtle, almost ironic, imitation of those around him." Surely James must have been, in these middle years, as much a model for Eliot as Laforgue was in his youth.

But this is all familiar ground, more or less. The virtue of Ackroyd's book is not that it uncovers a lot of fresh soil—indeed, it adds little to our understanding of Eliot as man, poet, or critic—but that it maps out the well-trod terrain more precisely than its predecessors have done. Ackroyd has managed something far from easy: he's rounded up enough material to slap together a respectable, relatively comprehensive biography of a man who did a great deal to insure that no one would be able to write his biography. If Ackroyd hasn't gotten very far beneath the surface of that detached, pontificating persona that Eliot presented to most of the world, he's captured, quite convincingly, something of the effect that that persona had on the people who encountered it. He makes us at once furious at the weakness that forced Eliot to adopt a pose, and impressed by the strength that enabled him to carry it off. Maybe it is too much—especially considering the restraints that have been placed on Ackroyd—to have expected him to pierce the double-breasted suit and bowler hat and see into the heart of the man, a heart only a handful of people (if any) saw into. Maybe there is nothing there to see. So, at least, Ackroyd seems to think; ultimately, he says, "we cannot reach into the mystery of Eliot's solitude." One hopes he is wrong, and that in time another (authorized?) biography will give us a somewhat more revealing picture of the Old Possum.

When and if such a biography does appear, one hopes that not only Eliot the man, but Eliot the most influential poet and critic of the century, will be more in evidence. Though Ackroyd dutifully catalogues the honors that Eliot collected during the latter part of his life, and makes reference once or twice to the poets or critics who followed Eliot's lead, a casual reader of *T. S. Eliot: A Life* might conceivably have little sense of exactly what Eliot had garnered these honors for, and precisely why his disciples on both sides of the Atlantic were so devoted to him. How can this be? Apparently determined to present a "balanced" account of Eliot's life and work, Ackroyd

fails, all too often, to distinguish the important from the less important, to give proper emphasis to those poems and essays that made Eliot the North Star for a generation of literary voyagers. Though Ackroyd devotes a good deal of space to "The Waste Land," for instance, his discussion of the poem is mostly concerned with Pound's revisions and such; Ackroyd has little to say about the poem's enduring influence, and about its position as a cornerstone of modern literature, except to suggest that its reputation is largely the result of misguided interpretations. (This is undoubtedly true, but it's hardly the whole story.)

Similarly, Ackroyd's only substantive reference to Eliot's surpassingly influential essays, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (which introduced the concept of the impersonality of the poet) and "Hamlet and His Problems," reads, in its entirety, as follows: "*The Sacred Wood* is perhaps best known for containing in handy form some of [Eliot's] most potent generalizations—the 'objective correlative' in the essay on *Hamlet*, and the entire argument of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent.'" There is no mention at all of "The Metaphysical Poets," in which Eliot describes his theory of the dissociation of sensibility and presents the idea (now as canonical as any in the world of poetry) that "poets in our civilization . . . must be *difficult*." Strangely enough, though he gives short shrift to these key essays in the history of modernism, Ackroyd finds room for relatively lengthy treatments of Eliot's lesser plays and of the intolerant, ill-received, and generally negligible volume *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*.

One would, in short, like to see a biography of Eliot that gives us more of a sense that this was a man who represented to an entire generation of Englishmen and Americans the supreme authority in matters literary; who presented the twentieth century with a classically disciplined means of seeking to understand itself; who taught modern poets how to write modern poetry and modern readers how to read it; and who (however distracted he may have been in

later years by religion and drama, and however many turns he may have taken in the course of his own literary development) remained to the end of his life the dean of literary modernism. If we are endlessly curious about the story of Eliot's life, and unusually frustrated by inadequate attempts to make sense of it within hard covers, it is because T. S. Eliot was the author of poems that have touched us profoundly and essays whose ideas have helped to shape the way we think about the nexus between the lives of men and the life of poetry. If Ackroyd's biography has failed to shed much light on that nexus, we can only hope that, in time, it will be superseded by a truly definitive text. In the meantime, we can read *T. S. Eliot: A Life* and come away knowing the man almost as well, perhaps, as many of his friends did—which is to say, not very well at all.

Ehrenburg's life

Anatol Goldberg Ilya Ehrenburg.
Viking, 312 pages, \$17.95

reviewed by Robert Conquest

The Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg has long seemed a significant, or at least a symptomatic figure. But significant or symptomatic of what? It is not merely that his career spanned from the first to the seventh decades of our century, with so many changes of fortune or direction, but also that he does not seem to have pulled the contradictions of his own personality together until the comparative and partial success of his last years. The late Anatol Goldberg's quirky but often fascinating book reflects a rather similar disjunction, in a way which is helpful, if sometimes distracting, to our understanding of the issues involved.

Ehrenburg was, above all, a representative of the literary-political intelligentsia that is to be found in continental Europe, particularly Eastern and Central Europe. (It is not really matched by anything we have in the Anglo-Saxon countries, except as an import,

like the Russian word "intelligentsia" itself.) He started in extreme youth as almost a caricature of the most avant-garde section of this intelligentsia and was known among the Bolsheviks as "shaggy Ilya." Recruited into the party by Bukharin at the age of sixteen, he was soon arrested and spent some months in jail before the usual rich parents got him abroad, where he left the Party as a result of listening to Trotsky's dogmatic views on literature. He never rejoined, but was later to pay at least lip service to aesthetic attitudes incomparably more dogmatic than Trotsky's.

His exile was in Paris, where he nearly became a Benedictine monk but soon settled down to the Closerie des Lilas and the Rotonde. After some work as a war correspondent, he was back in Russia in 1917, opposing the Bolshevik Revolution. Over the next few years he became reconciled, up to a point, with his old comrades. They join others in what seems a fair characterization—he was a "skeptic," "sardonic towards both Red and White," a "nihilist." But Bukharin helped get his first well-known work, *Julio Jurenito*, published; and for the next decade he moved between Moscow, Berlin, and Paris in somewhat distraught fashion, without really committing himself. In 1932, however, he made a definite decision to serve the Soviet regime—initially as *Izvestia* correspondent in Paris.

Ehrenburg seems to have realized that his country's political despotism would become even worse but to have hoped that literary liberties could be preserved. And from now on, he exemplifies one of the great moral dilemmas which have faced so many Europeans and others: to what extent is it permissible to collaborate with a tyranny with a view to limiting, however slightly, its excesses? It is the question which faced not Quisling but Laval, who, by his own lights, worked to save what he could of French liberty in case of a Nazi victory. To do so he had to acquiesce or participate in many dubious actions; the same is true of the members of the United Front who collaborated with Communist governments in the

postwar period. The criterion is, presumably, how far they succeed, which is usually not very far. In Ehrenburg's case, twenty years followed in which he had almost no effect, beyond sometimes preserving a little elbow room for himself, at the same time performing services, some of them disgraceful, to the despot. If Ehrenburg had died in 1953, there would be no more to say. But, as we shall see, he was able to defend literature to some extent after Stalin's death.

By the Thirties he had become a brilliant journalist. Goldberg quotes some of his pieces, taking them at face value. I remember myself being much struck by his reports on the Asturias rebellion and the *Schutzbund* rising. But the only time I met him, after the War, he wrote his vivid descriptions of the honest Bulgarian peasantry from the bar of the Bulgaria Hotel in Sofia. Such phenomena are not unknown in Western reporting; but in this case it was a matter of fiction decking out Stalinist disinformation.

This is not to imply total dishonesty. The rise of Hitler and the Spanish War engaged his real feelings, and his reports from Madrid, even if unreliable as fact, were powerful and stimulating. He contrived briefly to defend, not anarchism as such, but at least the ordinary anarchist workers; and although he went along with the virulent attacks on Trotskyism, he never made them his main theme, sticking mainly to the horrors of Francoism. Goldberg notes that some of his books were to be published in Spain while Franco was still in power, and wonders if Ehrenburg knew of this.

On returning to Moscow late in 1937, the question of his being sent back to Spain was unresolved, so he wrote directly to Stalin, who refused permission. Thereupon Ehrenburg wrote again, urging Stalin to reconsider, and was then let out. Such a request to the dictator to admit that he had made a mistake was totally out of harmony with the spirit of the times. Stalin's response will remind us that there was another strange personality besides Ehrenburg's involved in Ehrenburg's survival—Stalin's own.

Stalin was responsible for the slaughter of a great number of Soviet writers. It was later revealed that of the seven hundred writers who attended the first Writers' Congress in 1934 (at which Ehrenburg made a mild defense of non-tractor-meets-girl novels), only fifty survived to see the second in 1954, though the average age had been under forty. The victims included Babel, Pilnyak, Mandelstam, Vasilev, Tabidze—a whole roster of Russian and other genius. Nevertheless, Stalin was not predictable in this sphere. In fact, on the whole he seems to have preferred those not deeply concerned with Party matters, even those of wholly "alien" backgrounds, to Communists like Babel and Koltsov. *The Days of the Turbins*, notably heterodox, had been allowed on the Moscow stage. Pasternak (to Ehrenburg's own surprise) had been allowed to work while abject Party hacks had perished. The real leftists of RAPP had been condemned. And though "Socialist Realism" was formalized in 1934, Stalin allowed himself the caprice of making exceptions. When it came to individual decisions, like that on allowing Ehrenburg to go back to Spain (rather than face the normal sanction against indiscipline—death), Ehrenburg's rival, Konstantin Simonov, provides a penetrating analysis in one of his novels. A character, "General Serpilin," approaches Stalin to release a colleague, whose civil-war services he recounts. But,

Serpilin's recalling of past services had failed to touch Stalin. It was the directness of the letter that had interested him. In his ruthless character, side by side with a despotic demand for total subservience, which was the rule with him, there lay the need to come across exceptions—which was the obverse side of the same rule. At times he evinced something akin to flashes of interest in people who were capable of taking risks, of expressing opinions which ran counter to his own . . . Knowing himself, he knew the degree of this risk and was all the more capable of setting store by it. Sometimes, that is! Because it was far more frequently the other way round and this was where the risk lay.

INCHARDI

Novels by J. Inchardi
\$15 each

**Lines On The Death
Of A Fisherman**

Three Jews In A Tub

Dreamship

Yurros

A Paper Toy

Intercourse

Jehovah Mafioso

Saturn Maru

Drek Shlak

Om Budsman

Order from **Sirius Books**
P.O. Box 177
Freeport, Maine 04032

This is the normal caprice of oriental despotism. But in Stalin's case it also served, as has been pointed out by many *samizdat* commentators, to make the terror more effective by depriving it of the mere obvious rationality of killing suspect categories while leaving others with a feeling of security. As it was, no one felt safe, while everyone felt that with luck he might be spared—psychologically a major component of the terror.

Ehrenburg, as a notorious anti-Nazi, was virtually silenced by the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Until June 1941, the very word "fascist" disappeared from the Soviet vocabulary. But after the German invasion in 1941, Ehrenburg became the main anti-German propagandist. He had always been anti-German—one of the things which had divided him from the Bolsheviks in World War I—and now he was given free rein. He had also been hostile to "fascism" as such, partly but perhaps not centrally for its anti-Semitism. Indeed his main charge had been the literary one of the Nazi book burning. Goldberg supports this without comment, but there is nevertheless an ambiguity. In her *Memoirs*, Raisa Orlova makes the point that "They stoked up bonfires for books in our country as well, but . . . they were burned in Russian cities in secret"; and she quotes Ehrenburg himself in a speech in which he cited Babel as having visited a factory for pulping undesirable books into paper: "hefty wenches sit there and sensually rip off the covers."

Until the end of the war, Ehrenburg was unleashed for the most violent attacks on Germans as such. Goldberg, acquitting him of urging attacks on German women, implies that these did not take place, whereas it is clear that mass rape and murder was the accompaniment of the advance into East Prussia. At this point, Stalin, who had found the kill-all-Germans propaganda useful during the war, had a censure of Ehrenburg's line published, with a view to establishing a regime of his own in Berlin.

Ehrenburg was not, however, in serious trouble. But he was soon facing the most difficult time of his life. In 1948 the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was dissolved. Eh-

renburg, as a Jew by birth, had been used as a member of this body when its work had been useful to the Soviet regime. Many of his colleagues on the committee had been prominent in the field of Yiddish culture. Ehrenburg himself was a Russian writer and, as a Jew, an assimilationist. Before the Revolution, Goldberg notes, he had been addicted to the novels of Knut Hamsun, later cursing himself for it "not because Hamsun was a reactionary and an anti-Semite of the more primitive kind (most readers rightly attached little significance to his anti-Jewish bias or did not even notice it), but because he was a romantic." An interesting thing here is not so much that in those days Ehrenburg saw anti-Semitism as something obsolete, like crinolines, but that Goldberg could report it in this way after all the anti-Semitic horrors of later years.

But, when the Nazis had emerged, Ehrenburg took the honorable position that, as he later put it, while anti-Semitism existed, he was a Jew. And now, in the late Forties, anti-Semitism became one of the elements of Stalinism itself. Over the period 1948-1953, over four hundred Jewish intellectuals were arrested, and few survived. Most of the Yiddish writers were shot in the "Crimean Affair" in August 1952, after two or three years in labor camp. Ehrenburg meanwhile was sent abroad to defend the regime. He provided a great contribution in the West to the Stalin "peace campaign" (waged by the World Peace Council, an organization still prominent in Western "peace" affairs)—this was the period of the "Stockholm Peace Appeal," signed by millions, including almost all the North Korean Army, then on the point of the attack on the South. In addition, he found himself having to lie in a more personal way, claiming to know that nothing had happened to men he knew perfectly well to be in jail awaiting execution. Goldberg plausibly acquits him of a charge that he actually denounced Bergelson and Fefer and the others. But as their colleague on the Committee he could hardly have avoided interrogation about their activities, and anodyne answers, however reluctant,

LOUIS K. MEISEL
141 prince street ny

JACK LEMBECK

The 70's
Gallery A

MURRAY ALCOSSER

Photographs—Armageddon?
Gallery B

Jan. 5-26, 1985



Work by all

Photorealists

and

A continuing & expanding
commitment to

Abstract Painting

LOUIS K. MEISEL
141 prince street ny

were not acceptable to the MGB. The moral ambiguity of his situation was in any case obvious. But at the end of 1952 came the arrest of those accused in the Doctors' Plot, which was designed to bring the anti-Semitic campaign to its climax. By now even Ehrenburg was in danger. He is said to have refused to sign a letter drafted by the Party calling for leading Jewish intellectuals to apply for the deportation of the whole Jewish community to Siberia, though his letter expressing qualms, as given here in an appendix and referred to in the introduction, must either be on a different theme or be wrongly dated: his "refusal" is merely a request for instructions, and a promise to sign if "leading comrades" think it desirable. However that may be, the idea put forward here that this refusal was what saved the Jews from deportation is quite unreal. The plan seems to have been to hang the "Zionist" doctors and start the deportation of the Jews in mid-May 1953, and what saved them could not have been any action of Ehrenburg's, however brave and well-intentioned. Stalin's death on March 5 was what did it.

At this point Ehrenburg entered his best period. His novel *The Thaw* launched the whole idea of a return to freedom in literature, and not only in literature. Over the next years, he was violently denounced. But by now he was, if not a Grand Old Man, at least a respected senior figure; and his opponents were no longer in a position simply to kill him off. He was denounced, and largely silenced, several times. But as the political struggle gave openings, he used them to struggle for his views. Finally came his autobiography, *People, Years, Life*, of which Nadezhda Mandelstam wrote that it was "the only one of his books to have played a positive part in this country It may well have been he who first aroused people into reading *samizdat*."

It is hard to sum up such a career. Yevtushenko says that "he taught us to survive." But Ehrenburg made fewer unnecessary concessions, in a far worse period, than the younger man. He survived in part through

accident and caprice. He was not a writer of the first rank. But, if we find much of his activity abhorrent, those of us who have never been through the Soviet experience are not in a good position to pass judgment. Indeed, there are murky and disgraceful incidents in his life story. It remains true that whenever he had the power he showed a devotion to literature, including the reprobated literature of the West, and defended it as far as he could. Of course literature is not the most important thing there is, but in the circumstances of totalitarianism it is inseparable from a concern for truth. Some are concerned with truth for its own sake. Others, like Ehrenburg, are prepared to lie, but in the long run are forced into truth by their literary spirit.

Hawthorne's "secret"

Philip Young Hawthorne's Secret: An Un-Told Tale. David R. Godine, 183 pages, \$15.95

reviewed by James W. Tuttleton

According to Julian Hawthorne, the novelist's son, Herman Melville once said that "there was some secret in my father's life which has never been revealed," a secret that "accounted for the gloomy passages in his books." Hawthorne's lawyer, George Hillard, likewise read Hawthorne's knowledge of "the morbid anatomy of the human heart" as evidence that he was "burdened with secret sorrow." And Hawthorne's sister Elizabeth (Ebe) Hawthorne also told Julian that "Your father kept his very existence a secret, as far as possible."

All biographers have granted that Hawthorne was a deeply introspective, even introverted man who, for a dozen years after his college graduation from Bowdoin, kept pretty much to himself in Salem while he learned to write fiction. Afterward, he married Sophia Peabody, seemed sociable, fathered three children, published with great success, and became an esteemed public fig-

ure. Even so, Hawthorne was a true loner, a dark personality. While his marriage was without doubt one of the happiest and most celebrated in American literary history, even Sophia remarked after his death that "Such an unviolated sanctuary was his nature, I his inmost wife, never conceived or knew."

Hawthorne's friends and relations, then, pose him as a riddle, a man whose life was perhaps marked by an event that—like Young Goodman Brown's encounter with evil—forever afterward permeated his life with gloom. Julian, who wrote the life of his father, ransacked the records and interrogated all of these friends and relatives but came up with nothing. His father, he remarked, "had no stain . . . upon his conscience The closet . . . had no skeleton in it; there was nothing to be hidden." Did Julian miss something or conceal what he found? Was Hawthorne's "mystery" merely a function of his meditation on the ubiquity of evil in the human heart? Was it a by-product of his literary method—a symbolic mode embedded in gothic conventions? Could he merely have enjoyed mystifying his familiars even as he did his reading audience?

There is no doubt that Hawthorne loved to play the riddling game with his audience. In the famous autobiographical preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, he fueled all of this speculation by reflecting on his own ancestry. There he announced that "the grave, bearded, sable-cloaked . . . progenitor" of the Hawthorne family, "who came so early with his Bible and his sword," incarnated "all the Puritan traits, both good and evil." Hawthorne represents himself as implicated in their evil: "Strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine." And then he concludes by undertaking, through the agency of writing the novel, something like an expiation: "I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them . . . be now and henceforth removed."

What was this curse, thought by Hawthorne to have manifested itself in a taint of

the blood or a "moral disease" afflicting the Hawthornes? And if *The Scarlet Letter* is an act of expiation, what crime does it expiate and who committed it? Is it a crime of his ancestors in persecuting Quakers, Anabaptists, blasphemers, scandalmongers, adulteresses, and others of "whorish carriage"? (We know from the history of New England that Major William Hathorne [1607-1681] and his magistrate son John Hathorne [1641-1717] did wield the rod of correction with pious severity.) Or is it a crime committed by Nathaniel himself, whose shouldering of *their* guilt is a surreptitious way of confessing his own crime? If so, what was Hawthorne's crime?

We know that Hawthorne did not persecute witches or Anabaptists. But since *The Scarlet Letter* deals with adultery, could it be that Hawthorne committed adultery and expiated it through the act of writing the novel? Is he a closet Arthur Dimmesdale or a Parson Hooper mystifying his audience in the act of performing an obscure penance? Some critics and biographers have thought so, especially in view of Hawthorne's fascination with dark-complexioned women of intense overt sexuality. Such a "Dark Lady of Salem," with whom Hawthorne is supposed to have had an adulterous liaison, must have been the source of Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*, and Miriam in *The Marble Faun*. Hawthorne's attraction for this type of woman seems certainly odd, in view of the woman he married, who was the quintessence of nineteenth-century innocent femininity, a type celebrated in the fair, virginal purity of Priscilla in *Blithedale*, Hilda in *The Marble Faun*, and Phoebe in *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Some twenty years ago, Philip Young, in an essay called "Hawthorne and 100 Years" (*Kenyon Review*, 1965), revived the question of Hawthorne's secret. Speaking of himself in the third person, he remarked that "he fancies he knows what the secret *was*." And he remarked that "of the theorists" who had proposed a dark crime of which Hawthorne might be guilty, "he [Young] is the way-outest yet." Young promised that his revela-

tion of the mystery would explain “more than just the gloomy passages.” But like a coy mistress, he withheld it: “Never mind; mistrusting his tenure he does not intend to reveal it here. They can always get you for Moral Turpitude (and the hypothesis could be construed so as to involve something like that.)” And he rather facetiously concluded that “he means to publish it post-humously . . .” If anyone has been waiting these twenty years for the suspense to end, the moment is at hand.

Hawthorne's Secret: An Un-Told Tale is not, I should quickly say, a posthumous publication. At sixty-six, Young must feel secure in his tenure at Pennsylvania State University. In any case, the dark crime of which Hawthorne is alleged to be guilty is not adultery at all. It's incest. The news is hardly new. Leslie Fiedler guessed as much twenty-five years ago in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, and Frederick Crews made incest a central motif in his 1966 psychoanalytic study *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes*.

Now there is no gainsaying that Hawthorne had an interest in incest, as he did in all crimes of the heart, all passions and perversities. Melville compared him to Dante by virtue of the “great power of blackness in him” that derived its force “from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin . . .” Since Hawthorne himself conceded this puritanic strain in himself, an interest in incest is not out of the question. Did he write about incest?

In certain tales—for example, “Alice Doane's Appeal,” “The Haunted Mind,” and “Fancy's Shadow Box”—a motif of incest, though clouded in obscurity, can reasonably be deduced. In fact, Fiedler remarked twenty-five years ago that *The Marble Faun* and some of Hawthorne's unfinished manuscripts also suggested, obscurely, an Oedipal theme. Fiedler's exegesis of these stories did not stoop to any consideration of biographical fact, which would have been, for him, *infra dignitatem*, the hackwork of dry-as-dust pedants. Instead, he merely applied to the texts the unmasking methods of

Freudian psychoanalysis. In addition, Fiedler adduced Melville as a “proof” of Hawthorne's obsession. *Pierre* was offered to us as “Melville's attempt to confess for his alienated friend the secret sin which presumably haunted him through all his years.”

Then, in 1966, Frederick Crews did a full-blown psychoanalysis of Hawthorne's fiction in *The Sins of the Fathers* and found, predictably, the derivatives of the Oedipal theme, incest and parricide. Crews concluded that Hawthorne was obsessed by an unresolved incest neurosis that illustrated Freud's hard saying that “whoever is to be really free and happy must overcome his deference for women and come to terms with the idea of incest with mother or sister.” But again, as with Fiedler, Crews's interpretation is based only on symbols plucked from the stories, not on the basis of incontrovertible biographical fact. Both invoke the old Oedipal formula: Hawthorne was fixated on his mother, his father having died when he was four, and got rid of the guilt by writing about it. In the present work, though, Philip Young announces the discovery of the missing “facts” that will now ground Hawthorne's preoccupation with incest in the circumstances of his ancestry and his personal life. What are the facts?

First, let me rehearse Young's account of the facts and then test their validity. Young's thesis is that Hawthorne, an antiquarian who read widely in Salem colonial history, discovered a 1681 scandal in Salem in which one Nicholas Manning was accused of incest with his two sisters, Anstis Manning and Margaret Manning Polfery. Hawthorne was absorbed by this case since he was descended on his mother's side from the Manning clan and doubtless heard family tales about the infamous case. The 1681 incest trial would have obsessed him—as the source of the moral disease tainting his whole ancestry—because of his own incestuous relationship with his sister Ebe (this a displacement of his longing for his mother). The incestuous relationship with Ebe flowered in Hawthorne's solitary years when he lived

under the same roof with her. Finally, although Hawthorne broke free of this relationship with his sister and went on to marry Sophia, "Alice Doane's Appeal," *The Marble Faun*, and other tales represent Hawthorne's unsuccessful lifelong attempt to rid himself of a burden of guilt arising from acted-out or wished-for sexual relations with his sister.

Here we must pause to check the evidence. Did Hawthorne really know of the Manning incest case of 1681? We know that he read Felt's *Annals of Salem* (1827). Elizabeth checked out more than twelve hundred titles for him from the Salem Athenaeum, including this work. But Felt, who summarizes the case, does not identify the family involved. Here is what the *Annals* presents: "1681, March 29. Two females, for incest, are sentenced to be imprisoned a night, whipped, or pay 5£, and to stand or sit, during the services of the next lecture day, on a high stool, in the middle alley of Salem meeting-house, having a paper on their heads with their crime written in capital letters."

To get an identification of the participants, Hawthorne would have had to track down Felt's sources in the handwritten old manuscripts in the Quarterly Court Records of Salem. Did he? There is no evidence that he did. Nor is there any evidence that Hawthorne ever heard a family story that some of his ancestors had been brought up and convicted on a charge of "Vehement suspicion of committing incest." The whole argument that Hawthorne viewed incest as the family curse, the moral disease from which he too suffered, is based on assumption about his reading for which there is no solid evidence.

Setting aside the question of the family curse, then, what is the evidence that Hawthorne and his sister experienced incestuous desire and acted on it? First, Hawthorne lived for many years in the same house with Elizabeth. She was a dark beauty, said to resemble her mother; she never married. Next, Ebe identified with her brother and served his literary ambitions in a variety of ways—not merely checking out books but contributing articles to *The American Magazine*, which Hawthorne briefly edited, and

advising him on his apprentice tales. Finally, she opposed Hawthorne's marriage to Sophia, tried to block it, and hated Sophia long after her death. After Hawthorne's death Ebe directed his biographer to many of Hawthorne's youthful anonymous tales and sketches, including "Alice Doane's Appeal," of which she said it possessed his "peculiar genius." Finally, she is known to have objected to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Atlantic Monthly* article on Byron's incest with his half sister Augusta.

It is worth pointing out here that there are some facts that Young either suppresses or scantily credits. Ebe Hawthorne was a bizarre, reclusive woman who in some ways makes Emily Dickinson look like a social butterfly. A woman of private nocturnal habits, she shunned the daylight and avoided normal social intercourse. She no doubt saw her brother's marriage as a blow to her own literary career and a threat to the family income needed to support their widowed mother and her two daughters. As to Sophia Peabody, Ebe took an instant dislike to her sister-in-law when, on Sophia's first visit, Sophia claimed that the pillows smelled musty. It was downhill from there: Ebe quarreled with Sophia and Nathaniel about how the Hawthorne children were being reared, and she appeared to think that Hawthorne's writing suffered from Sophia's influence. As to her attention to Stowe's article on Byron's incest, we must observe that the piece caused an uproar in America, was full of inaccuracies, and paid subscriptions were canceled by the thousands. As the *Atlantic* editor William Dean Howells told a friend, it was "received with howls of rejection from almost every side where a critical dog is kept." Ebe's attention to the article, then, was nothing unusual: virtually everybody had some criticism of it. Possessive and peculiar she was, but there is no solid information to suggest that Ebe ever hankered after her brother. Did he lust after her, even if only as a surrogate for his mother?

Again, there is no convincing evidence. As a boy, Nathaniel feared Ebe's sharp tongue,

as a youth he admired her, and as a man he respected her and collaborated with her on literary projects. But he knew her for the bizarre recluse she was and mediated the quarrel between his wife and sister. Even after Hawthorne's marriage, during long periods of time when Ebe lived with Nathaniel and Sophia, they never saw her, even at meal times; for she kept almost entirely to herself, coming out only after dark to take extended walks. Hawthorne doubtless loved Ebe, despite her eccentricities (perhaps even for them), just as he loved his mother, also a strange personality, at whose death he was distraught. But there is nothing solid—in the letters, journals, or family anecdotes—on which to posit an incestuous relationship.

Yet Philip Young is convinced that, during that solitary period of Hawthorne's life with Ebe and the family on Herbert Street, "Something Happened." He goes on to say, "Just what that may have been—and the range of possibility is broad—it would be as fruitless as vulgar to guess." Then he goes on to guess. He opines that Hawthorne may have "sinned" in mind only, polluting his soul by the mere contemplation of incest with his sister, like the narrator in "The Haunted Mind" who is visited at night by a spectral figure, or like the speaker in "Fancy's Shadow Box" who meditates on guilt that may arise from impure thoughts.

But since guilty thoughts occur to everyone, "It stretches credulity to think that his nature contained such an area of culpability as a result of nothing more than imagination or longing." The deed must have been done. Without quite saying so, Young posits an actual act of incest as the source of Hawthorne's mystery, the expression of the family disease, the latent thematic of Hawthorne's greatest work, including *The Scarlet Letter*. Hester's crime is viewed as so resonant with horror that it cannot be mere adultery that Hawthorne is writing about. Since the Manning incest testimony included an affidavit of a servant who claimed that Nicholas's bedsheet was stained by a blood spot, made by his sister, this, for Young, is

the scarlet sign. What the novel is really about is incest.

Anyone with a respect for the patient work of assembling historical fact and biographical evidence that can withstand interrogation must be appalled at the cavalier way in which Hawthorne's life is treated in this study. Perhaps even worse is the rhetorical duplicity with which Young develops his argument. A hypothesis—e.g., that Hawthorne might have read about the Mannings' incest in the Quarterly Court Records—is posed as a "what-if"; then it is taken as fact, and on that "fact" another hypothesis is posed, leading to another "fact," culminating in a conclusion that is in fact a tissue of suppositions. Young, being too intelligent not to see that his method has no merit, then backs off from the drift of his own argument, and, instead of *asserting* the conclusion toward which he leads us, he resorts to rhetorical questions that merely insinuate his point. An instance:

So many things suggest a brother-sister relationship closer than normal, there is reluctance in drawing inferences which seem, paradoxically, too obvious to be valid . . . But . . . what then is to be made of a sister's open and long-lived admiration for "Alice Doane's Appeal," with its vibrant biographical overtones? (That if they were relevant to her and her brother she would never have mentioned the tale? She was bold: how bold?) How much might be made of her instant, blunt, undying dislike of her brother's wife? Why the vigorous immersion in the details of Byron's relations with his sister, and the ex cathedra rejection of the charges? Closer to home, to what degree can a sister be made out in the shade of that pale beauty who came in sin and desolation to a young man in the bed of his haunted mind, or stood beside it guilt-stained as a demon pointed to his breast? . . . In light of a sister's resemblance to a mother, might something more be made of a son's encephalitic reaction (Sophia's diagnosis) to a mother's death? Was the mysteriously injured foot, which as a boy crippled Nathaniel for two years, a Delphic sign that a better name for

him than Oberon ("white leprosy") might be Oedipus ("swell-foot")? Fancy's Shadow Box runs amuck.

What has run amuck here is Young himself. All that can be claimed as new fact in this book is Young's printing of the court records containing testimony in the Manning incest case of 1681, which Hawthorne cannot be proved to have known about. Beyond that, all is mere speculation. In fact, most of the details of the Manning incest case have already been tracked down and discussed in Gloria Erlich's *Family Themes and Hawthorne's Fiction: The Tenacious Web* (1984), which, although just published, has been available since 1977 in the form of her Princeton doctoral dissertation, which Young read before publishing his book. (Erlich does not read the Manning case as evidence that Hawthorne committed incest with his sister, although [being a Freudian herself] she does posit the "repressed desire" of Ebe for her brother.)

That Young—or even Erlich, for that matter—should have produced such a book, at this time, is in itself an oddity in contemporary Hawthorne criticism. For perhaps the most striking development in this field has been Frederick Crews's gradual but apparently complete rejection of the possibility of the psychoanalysis of dead authors and of

their literary texts. In his *Out of My System: Psychoanalysis, Ideology, and Critical Method* (1975), he conceded that "psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic" had shown itself to be "too prone to question-begging" and lacked a sufficient respect for facts to command our assent. In a complete volte-face, he claimed there "the irreducibility of literature to any functional perspective . . ." Even more recently, in these pages ("The Freudian Way of Knowledge," June 1984), Crews has attacked the heritage of Freud as a "pseudoscience that cannot be defended on any grounds" and attacked psychoanalytic literary critics as given over to a "spirit of unmasking" that plays fast and loose with the facts.

Crews's current position (he is, after all, the father of psychoanalytic Hawthorne criticism, as Fiedler is the godfather) has posed the inescapable crisis in this methodology that Young has nowhere addressed and of which he seems oblivious. This might be forgivable if his reading of Hawthorne were resolutely grounded on evidence that can withstand scrutiny, but it is not. One can only admire Crews's more forthright recent position—that his most "binding loyalty is not to a particular system but to the empirical attitude." Young, "the way-outest" critic yet, still ought to worry about Moral Turpitude.

On collecting

by Jed Perl

“Oh, provinces, I swear I’ll never again look for bibelots in your shops!” So writes Edmond Goncourt at the end of a journal entry of March, 1880. He has gone, with Daudet, Zola, and Charpentier, to spend the night with Flaubert in the country. On the way back to Paris they arrive in Rouen at two in the afternoon and decide to spend the rest of the day there and return to Paris in the evening. The idea is to look through the antique shops and have a good meal. But the meal is terrible and, because it is the Monday after Easter, the shops all turn out to be closed, save one, where Goncourt manages to buy a pair of andirons for three thousand francs—not, apparently, a bargain.

What Goncourt describes here is the frustration of the collector: botched connections, days begun in hope and finished in waste and disappointment. Coming into the town, Goncourt feels the territory to be pregnant with possibilities: behind a shop façade, around a corner, he senses, hidden, the love objects of the collector: great, fine, and inexpensive things. The disappointment of the abortive expedition mirrors the scale of the imagined triumph: the rare tour when every shop is open and he uncovers miracles aplenty, or when the one shop that is open contains something completely unexpected, the perfect find.

Reading the Goncourt entry today, we add to his story our fantasy sense of what it might be like to be transported to the shops of that late nineteenth-century town, when

eighteenth-century things could perhaps still be bought casually, every day. Reading thus, we are doubly Sundered: the shops are closed and we are a hundred years too late. I get a similar feeling even when I read of a minor collecting expedition of the 1950s, in a letter from the writer Julia Strachey, who is visiting Paris, to a friend in England. “We had got fifty pounds to spend, so by going only to inexpensive restaurants, we managed to buy two Picasso plates, six second-Empire plates, and a beautiful necklace for me.” Thirty years ago: when Picasso plates were cheap!

Cheap, expensive. Money so often seems to be what collectors talk about. One collector announces that he has paid more than he has ever paid before: the object in question is a once-in-a-lifetime, a great find. Another collector speaks, triumph in his voice, of buying for two dollars a book that is worth two hundred dollars. Yet to the outsider what does this all mean? Talk of expensive purchases sounds like a boast of wealth, and one hundred and ninety-eight dollars is not really a great deal of money at all.

For the collector what matters about the price has little to do with dollars and cents. The price is an external souvenir, a convenient shorthand for the victory of the catch. What the acquisition of a treasured object is really about is often much too hard to convey to the noncollector—or to other collectors. The price is a kind of violation of the purity of the object: how can such things

be reduced to dollars and cents? And yet it is through the price that the object comes to the collector.

Collecting—whether of first editions, china, furniture—always seems to move toward obsession. Collecting has no clear object: it is non-utilitarian, and there is nothing that can round off the activity. (The collector who sees collecting as finite is deluded or not really a collector.) With nothing to stop them, collectors tend to pick up speed as they go along, enlarging their field of action. Collectors are always saying that they have turned a corner, cut down, bought nothing (“except for . . .”), quit. But collectors, who are always looking for the next thing, the better thing, are optimists. To collect is to hope—and who can stop hoping?

Collectors are omnivorous: they want to eat up the world. For collectors, shops and auction houses that trade in old things are dream interiors where anything is possible. It is in these places that collectors do their devouring. The junk store in a distant town, the famous establishment in the center of the big city: these are places out of time—you enter and you disappear. These are places, too, of strange encounters. Goncourt regards a pale, familiar-looking figure at Bing’s, who—it finally occurs to him—is Sarah Bernhardt. You meet a friend (rival) in a shop you didn’t know the friend knew. You see a famous picture dealer buying pieces of extraordinarily ugly china—desirable for their ugliness—in a grubby little downtown shop. At the bottom of a stack, in the last corner, after you have gone through everything, you find it, something that you may not even have been looking for but that you now know is the object of the search. When you are back on the street, among the crowd, you emerge from a sort of trance. Your only evidence of the search is the purchase you have made.

What is brought home from the shop is the token of the dream. Walter Benjamin says, in his essay on book collecting, “The most profound endowment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a

major circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them” The collector becomes a part of the history of the object and, as such, has an influence on the fate of the thing. *The House of Life*, the strange and beautiful autobiography of the Italian scholar and belletrist Mario Praz, is the perfect collector’s story. Praz relates his life in the form of a room-by-room tour of his Roman apartment. His great collection of Empire furniture, his books, pictures, plates, clocks, and candlesticks act as keys, each one unlocking reminiscences that ramble through typical collectors’ tales of the pursuit or that veer off into love affairs, friendships, travels, family connections, early days.

For the collector, the object unlocks and merges into a double past: his own and its own. In Boston I bought for twelve dollars and fifty cents from one of the large, book-piled tables at Goodspeeds Milk Street (the place where Goodspeeds, a fancy Boston Americana dealer, dumps his miscellaneous stock) a copy of the catalogue of the *Salon of 1824*. What serendipity that the one *Salon* at Goodspeeds that day should be a great year, 1824, the year Constables were first shown in Paris and made so deep an impression on Delacroix. Delacroix (identified as living at “rue de Grenelle-Saint-Germain n. 118”) is represented with *The Massacre at Chios*; Ingres (“à Florence”) has four pictures; Géricault (“feu”), two. Amidst these great figures—the last, really, who believed in the grand tradition—one comes upon, strange and wonderful, Daguerre (“au Diorama”), whose name evokes so much that is soon to come. This *Salon of 1824* is a modest book, crummily bound, just a list. But to take it off the bookshelf and remember Milk Street and the sleaziness of downtown Boston is, somehow, to feel a bit closer to *The Massacre at Chios*, Constable, Paris on the verge of its greatest hundred years.

A few years ago I went to a day-long symposium on photography, more or less designed for people who wanted to “get into” the field—new buyers, new dealers. There

was a panel made up of well-known collectors. Two of the three panelists began by telling the audience that one should only collect for love, after which this injunction trailed off into stories of great “killings,” and of how all the purchases made for love increased in value. Then Sam Wagstaff, probably the most interesting photography collector in America, began to speak. Within a few minutes I’m sure he’d lost the audience, because he got into a rambling train of thought studded with quotations from Mae West and Andy Warhol. Where this ended up was in a deeply serious defense of collecting, a kind of ethics of collecting. Collectors, Wagstaff argued, often labor to preserve aspects of the past—ephemeral publications, marginal works of art—when these things are headed for the trash bin, overlooked by the traditional custodians of culture in the museums, libraries, and schools. Wagstaff’s collector was a kind of odd man out, conservationist of the man-made past, and Wagstaff’s remarks took a trajectory that made collecting seem a strangely clean, pure pursuit. The announcement, made early last summer, that the Wagstaff collection, along with a number of other private collections of photography, had been purchased by the Getty Museum—doubtless for a great deal of money—does not lessen the force of

Wagstaff’s remarks. Collecting always mixes up the sacred and the profane, for it validates the collector’s sensibility through the terms of the marketplace.

Rarely does one hear collecting approached from the perspective Wagstaff took at the photography symposium. In part this is because many collectors feel that there is nothing pure or absolute about collecting. For the majority of collectors, though, I think the abstractness of collecting—its remoteness from everyday concerns—remains something that they feel deep in their hearts but find impossible to express. What strikes the outsider and often sickens the insider is the grubbiness of the collector’s life. Breakage, exaggerated or inaccurate descriptions, boredom, petty betrayals, overspending, regret—these are the collector’s burden. Autumn leaves in New England, another cup of coffee after lunch, a visit to the museum are shoved aside, opportunities lost so other opportunities won’t be lost. All this for the eighteenth-century chair, the Delft tile, the Italian children’s book. For collectors, always addicted to associations, these things transcend themselves. The real object lies beyond the object, in the way that material possessions can step out of place, born up on mysterious trajectories of time, meaning, and emotion.

Steinway on the block

by Samuel Lipman

Buried in a recent press release under the innocuous headline "CBS Announces Euro-market Debt Offering" there was some interesting news for the music public. After a cursory summary of financing plans incidental to a raft of new acquisitions in magazines and cable television, the December 3 release got to its main business: CBS has decided to sell its properties in the musical instrument field. The release didn't say which properties were involved, but it did announce that they would be disposed of at a loss, and that the adviser to CBS in the disposition process would be James D. Wolfensohn, Inc., the investment banking firm led by, and named for, a man who is powerful in the financial community and an advisory director of the Metropolitan Opera, chairman of the board of the Carnegie Hall Corporation, and a close associate of violinist Isaac Stern and other musical notables.

As both the next day's *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* properly printed, CBS's musical holdings include such varied properties as Fender guitars, Gulbransen organs, Rogers drums, Rhodes electronic pianos, Gemeinhardt flutes and piccolos, Lyon & Healy harps, Rodgers organs—and Steinway pianos. The first six trademarks, with the possible exception of Lyon & Healy harps, seem like little more than the flotsam and jetsam of the band and pop worlds, monuments to corporate shoppers' insatiable appetite for last year's marketing successes. But Steinway & Sons, the 132-year-

old piano maker, is a commercial and artistic horse of another color.

Often called the Rolls Royce of pianos, but in fact the Stradivarius of keyboard instruments, the Steinway is not just one kind of piano among many. It is the highest development of the instrument in design and construction and the very definition of what a piano sounds like, for musicians and public alike. It has a scale that is even in sound throughout its eighty-eight-note compass; a focused, powerful, and clear-cutting bass; a middle register that is rich without being oppressive; and a treble that is at once piercing and songful. Taken together these virtues produce a musical whole measured against which the characteristic tone qualities of other pianos, foreign and domestic, seem fragmented, limited, and idiosyncratic when not palpably peculiar. And the Steinway action (the technical pathway by which the player's finger commands are mechanically translated into sound) is not only challenging for unsophisticated and unwary players to control but also provides experienced artists with a measured subtlety and limitless variety of response that no other piano has been able to match.

The result of Steinway's artistic pre-eminence over almost a century and a half has been a commercial ascendancy in the fine piano market. Other makers, mainly Japanese, have sold vastly more instruments, but their output has been directed toward the mass consumption of beginning piano stu-

Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture

June 19 - August 21, 1985

An independent work program for sixty advanced painters and sculptors with twelve resident and visiting artists working in a rural Maine community.

Application deadline: FEBRUARY 28

For information write:

329 East 68th Street

New York, N.Y., 10021

Telephone: 212 861-9270

Resident Artists

John Chamberlain

Louisa Chase

Roy De Forest

Sidney Goodman

Mary Heilmann

Betye Saar

Visiting Artists

Richard Artschwager

Elizabeth Catlett

Eric Fischl

Elizabeth Murray

Richard Serra

Willard W. Cummings

Lecturer

Hilton Kramer

dents, educational institutions, and popular commercial venues. A few makers—Bösendorfer in Austria and Bechstein in Germany come immediately to mind—have concentrated on the luxury market of buyers who wanted a “special” instrument to put on musical display. These pianos have been of too limited a circulation to be able to define the field. Only Steinway has managed to put its pianos in the homes of most serious music lovers, in the studios of almost all the greatest pianists of today, and in the most prestigious concert halls across the world. Adding to Steinway’s *cachet* is its long historical association with such great pianists of the past as Hofmann and Paderewski, and with such towering composer-pianists as Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev—even with the legendary Franz Liszt. All in all, the Steinway slogan, “The Instrument of the Immortals,” seems justifiable hyperbole.

The architect of today’s Steinway piano was the firm’s founder in 1853, Henry Engelhard Steinway; the architect of its commer-

cial rise and almost uninterrupted solid profitability was until 1972 the Steinway family itself. In that year the family sold its interest to CBS, though for several years thereafter it remained in something more than titular leadership of the firm. As the 1970s wore on, however, the Steinways began to leave the management, and they were replaced at the top by executives chosen by CBS. Two presidents imported from the wider corporate world were brought in and rather quickly found wanting; the third, by all accounts very much a success, arrived in 1982 and is still in office. Throughout this period the firm’s personnel problems were mirrored by severe problems of quality control; attempts to refurbish and streamline outdated (but vital) manufacturing processes produced until recently a marked (at least to my ears) degeneration in the standards to which the Steinway piano aspired. Dealer relations too seemed to fall into disarray, perhaps because of CBS’s uncertainty over the proper place of the firm in the corporate scheme of things. Overall, the verdict on

CBS's control of Steinway thus must be somewhat unfavorable: whatever the good intentions might have been, the result was unsatisfactory both as business and as art.

Despite much attention given to the problem, CBS seems to have been unable to grasp the special nature of the manufactured object for which it took over responsibility in 1972. Made both in the United States and in Europe—in Long Island City just across the East River from Manhattan, and in Hamburg, West Germany—the Steinway draws its particular quality not just from the *way* it is made but also from *where* it is made. The German Steinway, fast in action and brilliant in sound, is very much a product of German craftsmanship and the needs of European concert halls; it is more resonant but also less focused in sound than its American counterpart. The American Steinway gains its individuality from the uniquely skilled New York work force and from the particular weather characteristics—rain, cold and heat, pollution, etc.—under which the wood for the pianos is cured outdoors at the factory.

Merely to speak of what is after all an industrial product in such a way is to demonstrate just what a peculiar bear CBS had by the tail when it took over Steinway. Now that the conglomerate's burden is about to be disposed of, there will understandably be fears about just who might purchase what CBS has been unable to run comfortably. The possibilities are several: an inferior but larger piano maker, most likely in the Orient, might buy Steinway for its top-of-the-line image value; an entrepreneur might buy the firm and sell off as separate items the immensely valuable trademark and the equally valuable plots of factory real estate in Long Island City and in Hamburg; an-

other kind of corporate buccaneer might buy the firm solely for its name and then affix that name to all manner of more-or-less musical instruments and artifacts; finally, a star-studded group of musicians and notables might buy in to save a national treasure, in somewhat the same public way Isaac Stern saved Carnegie Hall from the wreck-er's ball in the 1960s.

All these possibilities suggest just how difficult finding a proper buyer for Steinway & Sons is going to be. It is easy to put down some criteria for such a purchaser, for they are rather simple: capital, a desire to run a relatively small firm personally and energetically from the top; an intimate knowledge of the piano business; the ability to see the piano as a servant of music, and not the other way round. All these criteria can be subsumed under one simple one—the commitment to build the best piano in the world, nothing more, nothing less.

Such a purchaser would, in fact, bear something of a resemblance to the Steinway family itself. Were such a purchaser to be found, we might have the beginnings of an answer to those liberals—and some traditionalist conservatives as well—who posit an inevitable contradiction between commerce and culture, between money-making and art-making, and at its root, between capitalism and the life of the mind. For the first one hundred twenty or so years of its existence, the Steinway piano was indubitable proof that a great artistic tool, itself rising to a kind of art, could be made under the conditions of American capitalist democracy. As long as there are people who are willing to make money by working hard to produce something, even artistic needs can be satisfied. Just because CBS failed in the task doesn't mean the task is hopeless.

Who's afraid of Tom Wolfe?

by Robert Richman

Tom Wolfe, social satirist and best-selling author, was on hand the evening of November 28 at the Asia Society in New York to give the second of this year's four "Distinguished Lectures on American Art and Culture of the Twentieth Century" sponsored by the Whitney Museum's Department of Public Education. The series' three other speakers are Leo Steinberg, J. Kirk T. Varnedoe, and Robert Hughes. That Wolfe is not as serious—or, to use the Whitney's term, "distinguished"—a thinker on art as his fellow lecturers was a fact not lost on the small audience in attendance, comprised almost entirely of Whitney members and art-world people. Nor was it lost on the Whitney sponsors themselves. Russell Connor, the Whitney's Head of Public Education, facetiously remarked in his introduction that, as he spoke, the movie people were backstage negotiating with Wolfe for the film rights to *The Painted Word* (1975), Wolfe's one-hundred-and-twenty-page "debunking," as the jacket copy of the paperback edition says, of the "phonies" behind the "great American myth of modern art." "We've signed Jeremy Irons to play Leo Steinberg," said Mr. Connor, in effect banishing Wolfe from the world of art to the world of pop culture. When Wolfe bounded onstage, dressed in a white three-piece suit, Mr. Connor's anecdote rang even truer.

In the elegant brochure describing the lecture series, Wolfe's title was the rather staid "The Big Shift: Changes in Artistic

Taste in the Final Fifteen Years of the Twentieth Century." But Wolfe in his opening remarks revealed the title he really had in mind, the far more pedestrian "Will Picasso Become the William Adolphe Bouguereau of the Twenty-First Century?" Wolfe's talk centered on a few predictions about shifts in taste and value in the arts. The first prediction was that, by the year 2000, Picasso will be considered as trivial a painter as Adolphe William Bouguereau (1825-1905), the French academic painter, is to us today. Bouguereau, said Wolfe, was the "epitome of art" in the nineteenth century; indeed, he had "all the prestige of Picasso." His work, Wolfe told us, was avidly sought by the Vanderbilts and the Astors. "By the time I reached graduate school at Yale," said Wolfe, "Bouguereau was a term of mockery." What became of all those Bouguereaus in the Vanderbilt and Astor collections? "They were dumped on Southerners in the Twenties," said Wolfe. "If you go to Wilmington, North Carolina, you'll find them." Wolfe foresees the same swift and ignominious collapse of the reputation of Picasso in the next fifteen years.

Wolfe then shifted from painting to sculpture to make his next prediction. "Daniel Chester French," said Wolfe, "was the most famous sculptor in America in the nineteenth century." But he too was a casualty of a "big shift" in taste. "When French died in 1931, he was forgotten." Wolfe's candidate for the Daniel Chester French of the twenty-

first century? Henry Moore. “Today,” said Wolfe, “an American city does not consider itself validated unless it owns a Henry Moore.” Just think “how remarkable it’s going to be: in just fifteen years, taste will change so rapidly that Picasso will be the Bouguereau, Moore will be the French of the twenty-first century.”

Tom Wolfe’s third prediction concerned Philip Johnson’s AT&T building, which won’t be remembered for its controversial pediment, he said, but rather “because it has a front door.” Buildings of the last forty years, explained Wolfe, have had “hidden” entrances, an outgrowth of a Marxist or worker-inspired ideological revolt against “the bourgeois grandiosity of large front entrances.” (These remarks echoed the thesis of Wolfe’s 1981 book, *From Bauhaus to Our House*.) “Bourgeois cornices and curves were also *verboten*,” said Wolfe. But now, in the Eighties, all this has changed. Johnson’s building represents a “permission slip” for a “return to theatricality” in buildings. “Now you’re seeing front doors.” There has been a change in the academy of late as well, Wolfe went on to say. Where once architecture students went about “signing petitions demanding an end to the laborious process of architectural drawings,” nowadays “drawings can’t come off the architect’s tables fast enough.”

Wolfe then summarized his argument in *The Painted Word*, apparently as evidence of his assertions. He told us how modern painting has been a gradual “cleansing out” of “all the bourgeois detritus” left over from nineteenth-century painting. Wolfe’s history of modern art is a history of the “monomaniacal task of *reduction* . . . in a rush to reach perfect zero.” It began when early modern painters disposed of nineteenth-century “storybook realism.” It continued when the Cubists dispensed with representational objects. Then the Abstract Expressionists removed the third dimension. The Color Fielders then stripped away “evocative” (e.g., bourgeois) brushstrokes and expressive globs of paint. The Minimalists discarded “lovely colors” (replacing them with

“Tool-and-Die Works red and Subway I-Beam green”) and complicated design (favoring “hard linear geometries”).

The “monomaniacal task of reduction” and “pell-mell rush to zero” didn’t stop there, however. The frame still had to go—thus began the era of installations that couldn’t be separated from the museum itself. But the museum could go too: so began Earth Art. But what about the very idea of an art object at all? (“How bourgeois,” said Wolfe, mocking the reductionists.) Thus the birth of Conceptual Art: documentation referring to an art object that may or may not exist. This was the apotheosis of “the painted word.”

There has been a similar “rush to reach perfect zero” in other arts as well, said Wolfe. In dance it was reached when pieces were performed behind curtains so the audience couldn’t “interface” with the spectacle. In music “perfect zero” was reached when composers stopped giving concerts. “Who Cares If You Listen,” Milton Babbitt’s 1958 article, was cited as the theoretical touchstone for this impulse among contemporary composers. Instead of concerts, said Wolfe, there were “conferences” where students and faculty “passed around scores.” “They say one composer’s scores—his name was Charles Wuorinen—were out of this world.”

And what does Picasso have to do with all of this? Since Picasso had initiated the “monomaniacal”—and, to Wolfe, entirely pointless—“task of reduction,” Picasso deserves the same cruel fate as Bouguereau. Picasso is as guilty as Charles Wuorinen for conspiring to undermine “bourgeois” beauty of nineteenth-century art. And when taste shifts in the next two decades, Wolfe predicted, Picasso will get his. Picasso will be the Adolphe William Bouguereau of the twenty-first century. “In the Salon de Picasso in Ripley’s Believe-It-Or-Not Center” of the twenty-first century, said Wolfe, “students will be brought in front of *Les Femmes d’Alger* and *Guernica* and they’ll say, ‘But they meant it. They meant every word of it.’”

Now why has the Whitney Museum's Department of Public Education (in conjunction with the Anne Burnett and Charles Tandy Foundation) chosen to present Wolfe in its "Distinguished Lectures" series? Certainly not, as the foregoing makes clear, to educate the public about art—Wolfe knows nothing about art. His ignorance seemed even to extend to the subject of Bouguereau. Wolfe appeared to be unaware that a Bouguereau revival has been in progress for some years, one that resulted in a major retrospective exhibition at the Petit Palais in Paris in 1984 and a current exhibition (on view until January 13) at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut. In turning his attention to the fine arts, Wolfe doesn't even do them the justice of doing his homework. Much less does he "relate twentieth-century American art to its social, political, and cultural

context," as the Whitney sponsors had asked each speaker to do.

To return to the question posed above—why was Wolfe sponsored by the Whitney Museum? The answer must lie in its wish to corner a celebrity whose presence will create a public-relations scandal. If this was the Museum's intention, it was a total failure. The serious art public gathered in the Asia Society's small Wallace auditorium wasn't so easily fooled—or amused. Few in the audience laughed at Wolfe's many "outrageous" remarks, which were all designed to provoke the kind of philistine outrage that has as its source a deep-seated insecurity about modern art in all its guises. It was quite plain, long before Wolfe finished speaking, that the whole thing would have played better in Peoria, perhaps—or in Hollywood, as Russell Connor in his own way so aptly suggested.

Letters

Censorship & *20th-Century Culture*

To the Editors:

In the October issue, Geoffrey Sampson portrays himself as a pathetic victim of “censorship” imposed by Harper & Row under my threat of libel action, after I had “complained to Fontana/Collins” (the British publisher of *20th-Century Culture*, the reference work in which his entry concerning me appears), and claims that I “rush[ed] to law in order to suppress freedom of expression.” These are brazen lies.

I was never in contact with either publisher. I did correspond with the editor, Lord Bullock, providing him with ample documentation that the entry contained a series of disgraceful fabrications. The question of a libel action never arose. I will gladly make available my letters to Lord Bullock, and the publishers will surely confirm that I had no contact with them at all, thus settling the matter conclusively.

Sampson chooses to begin the story with his book *Liberty and Language*, and I will do him the favor of not tracing it back any further. Sampson describes this comical tract, which is the source of several of the more fanciful allegations in his Fontana entry and has been shown in the professional literature to be a structure of sheer fantasy and fabrication (see, e.g., D. Lightfoot, *Journal of Linguistics*, 17.1, 1981), as “a book analyzing the links between Chomsky’s linguistic and political ideas.” Sampson attributes to me the idiotic view that “syntax refutes liberalism” while adopting the equally idiotic position that his Thatcherite views are supported by semantics; a person hold-

ing either position deserves sympathy, not criticism. Sampson of course knew that I had always emphasized that there was at most a remote and extremely tenuous connection between my views on language and other matters, surely no “logical connexion” as he absurdly claims (and in fact, in the articles to which he refers, while stressing this obvious point, I traced my own anarchist ideas to their classical liberal sources). He took care of this slight problem by explaining that my “fine-sounding words . . . actually mean something close to the opposite of what they appear to say,” a principle of exegesis with intriguing possibilities that Sampson exploits with much fervor.

On reading Sampson’s entry in the Fontana volume, I wrote to Lord Bullock with extensive documentation refuting his allegations, including those he attempts to justify in *The New Criterion* and others on the matters just mentioned, concluding as follows: “Sampson may write whatever nonsense he pleases; this is none of my concern, and I have naturally never so much as commented publicly on his fabrications, though I have devoted considerable effort to responding to critical discussion that maintains minimal levels of intellectual integrity. With regard to a book, readers can form their own conclusions. But an entry in a reference work is something quite different. Readers rely on the reputation of the editors to guarantee that what is presented is accurate, not fabrication and mere slander as in this case; and the editors surely have a responsibility to justify this trust. In my preceding letter I cited two outright lies; in this one I have added several more. I trust that you will investigate the

matter, and will see to it that this scurrilous material is removed, forthwith, and with appropriate notification of the fact."

Lord Bullock informed me of his decision that in a forthcoming American edition, which until then I knew nothing about, the entry would be replaced by a factual entry of the sort that appears in all other cases. That ended the matter, except for a letter in which I informed Lord Bullock that I felt the decision was inadequate, since in the British and American hardcover editions there remained an entry of the sort that might appear in the Soviet Encyclopedia concerning some political dissident.

The "censorship" of which Sampson complains, then, consists of the fact that the target of his lies provided documentation refuting them, after which they were removed by the editor of the reference work in which they appeared. His elaborate tales about "libel actions" and the rest are sheer invention. He may be credited with considerable gall, though little else.

A few comments concerning Sampson's attempt to justify his patently false allegations. With regard to my alleged "support [for] the Communist cause" in Indochina, Sampson cites several favorable remarks concerning the Vietnamese Communists, which are, in each case, quoted from sources close to the U.S. government as part of an analysis of the problems faced in crushing resistance to American aggression in Indochina (or as the Party Line has it, the "defense of South Vietnam"). As Sampson knows very well, I have always been a harsh critic of Leninist doctrine and practice, and I opposed the U.S. wars in Indochina on the same grounds on which I oppose the Russian invasion of Afghanistan: not because of my assessment of the victims of aggression, but because I am opposed to aggression.

With regard to Cambodia, Sampson cites what others have said but scrupulously avoids what I wrote: a review-article in the *Nation* (June 25, 1977) and a chapter in volume II of *Political Economy of Human Rights* ([PEHR], 1979), both co-authored with E. S. Herman. The sole phrase of ours that he reports appears in a quote from someone else that reads: "There is also the Chomsky-Herman statement that Cambodian executions have numbered at most in the thou-

sands." There is no such "Chomsky-Herman statement"; rather, we correctly stated that such assessments were given by others to whom we referred. We cited the full range of such assessments then available, concluding that "We do not pretend to know where the truth lies amidst" them. Returning to Sampson, outside of the world of Stalinism, facts are not established when a liar quotes a gross misquotation.

Sampson uses François Ponchaud as his primary source, but is silent about our 1977 recommendation of his *Cambodge année zéro* as "serious and worth reading," with its "grisly account of what refugees have reported to him about the barbarity of their treatment at the hands of the Khmer Rouge." Sampson is also silent about the fact that in the American edition Ponchaud acknowledges our praise, and praises me in turn for the "responsible attitude and precision of thought" shown in what I had written on Cambodia, including everything during the Khmer Rouge period: this single article and some correspondence he had seen. Note that I am referring to the American edition; on the simultaneous British edition, see the discussion in PEHR.

Sampson attributes to us the position that (in his words) "refugees will retail exaggerated or fabricated accounts of the horrors of the regime they have left." He suppresses the fact that we were citing his source, François Ponchaud, who writes that "each [refugee] recounts what he saw or heard, his imagination and homesickness tending to exaggerate and distort the facts," and Charles Twining, whom the State Department plausibly regarded as "really the best expert" in the world on Cambodian refugees and who explained that "You must talk to a refugee as soon as he comes out or the story may become exaggerated." Note again the Sampsonian technique of falsification.

In PEHR, we began by observing that "the record of atrocities in Cambodia is substantial and often gruesome," and that "there is no difficulty in documenting major atrocities and oppression, primarily from the reports of refugees," which we did not seriously question, contrary to another of his fabrications; we accepted reports by Ponchaud, Twining, and other credible observers at face value, while noting their qualifica-

tions. Sampson's claim in his entry that I "minimized" Cambodian atrocities is another lie: we drew no conclusions about the scale of atrocities and indeed ended by saying that "When the facts are in, it may turn out that the more extreme condemnations were in fact correct," even those conceded by their authors to be inventions. We also documented a record of fabrication and deceit that would have made Orwell gasp, while emphasizing clearly and repeatedly that our primary concern, in this two-volume study of U.S. policy and propaganda, was not to assess the evidence available but rather the constructions erected on the basis of it: the ways in which the torture of the people of Cambodia was being exploited in the West. We emphasized throughout that "Correspondingly, we have not developed or expressed our views here on the nature of the Indochinese regimes" or attempted "to assess the contemporary situation in Indochina and the programs of the current ruling groups," a "worthwhile endeavor, but it has not been our objective." We compared the atrocities in Cambodia to the near-genocide (supported by the U.S.) in Timor at the same time, and analyzed carefully the shameful suppression of the latter in the U.S., including the pretense, repeated by Sampson, that refugee reports were unavailable. As we demonstrated, this was false, merely a form of apologetics for atrocities, and there was also ample other evidence that was simply concealed. We also showed that the pattern was far more general.

One can see why Sampson is so conscientious about avoiding direct quotation. Perhaps he believes that one should have the right to lie at will concerning official enemies while suppressing atrocities for which one bears direct responsibility, as in the case of Timor, just as he evidently believes—as just illustrated—that it is legitimate to lie at will about political enemies. If so, he should say so directly, instead of concealing this conviction in a fabric of deceit.

Sampson also seriously falsifies the "Faurisson affair" and my role in it. He conceals the fact that after having been suspended from teaching French literature under threat of violence, Faurisson was brought to trial for falsification of history and condemned for failure of "responsibility" and "prudence" as a historian, for failing to

deal properly with "all the documents and all the testimony," for treating documents with "a semantic analysis always oriented in the direction of negation," and for "allowing others [!] to use his writings" for nefarious ends. The courts thus established a version of the Zhdanov doctrine: the state has the right to determine historical truth and to punish deviation from it. Sampson claims that I "endorsed" a book of Faurisson's while "admitting" that I had not read it. As he knows, I endorsed principles familiar since the Enlightenment while making it absolutely clear that Faurisson's views were diametrically opposed to my own, repeatedly quoting my own view that the Holocaust was "the most fantastic outburst of collective insanity in human history" and that we degrade ourselves by even entering into debate over the matter. I did not "admit" but rather asserted that I had not read the book in question—Faurisson's *Memoir in defense against those who accuse me of falsification of History*, that is, his defense against the court charges—and indeed could not have read it since I did not know that it existed, until I learned that my statement, "Some Elementary Remarks on the Right of Freedom of Expression," had been added to it as an "avis" ("opinion"). Sampson repeatedly pretends that I wrote this statement with the expectation that it would be used in Faurisson's book; he is well aware that the charge is not only false, but absurd, since I did not even know of the existence of Faurisson's "Memoir in defense" against the court charges.

Perhaps Sampson approves of the Stalinist principle enunciated by the French courts, which he suppresses. If so, he should again have the honesty to say so instead of resorting to lies concerning those who find Stalinist/fascist doctrine scandalous. Sampson evokes the memory of the victims of the Holocaust in his defense. I will simply quote myself: "It is a poor service to the memory of the victims of the holocaust to adopt a central doctrine of their murderers."

There is something farcical about Sampson's falsifications on this matter. I have, in fact, taken far more controversial positions than this in support of freedom of expression, for example, in 1969, when I publicly insisted that people I regard as war criminals be permitted to teach and to conduct research that was then being used to

murder and destroy; no one accuses Faurisson of advocating or contributing to mass murder. Sampson's hypocrisy is revealed with utter clarity by his failure to raise any question about this position, which is truly controversial, while fabricating a web of deceit with regard to my opposition to the Zhdanov doctrine.

I have dealt with only a few of Sampson's falsifications; it takes only a phrase to produce a lie, much more space to refute it. I will be glad to elaborate here, point by point, if given the space. If not, I can only offer to make my letters to Lord Bullock available and to respond privately to any specific request.

Noam Chomsky
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Geoffrey Sampson replies:

It is absurd for Noam Chomsky to say that I portray myself as a "pathetic victim" of censorship. The victim, if that word is appropriate, is the American book-buying public who has been prevented from reading my assessment of Chomsky's remarkable recent career.

Apparently Chomsky prefers to attack me personally, as an easier alternative to dealing with the specific criticisms I made of his actions. He devotes a long paragraph to an extravagantly negative review of my book *Liberty and Language*, which has precisely nothing to do with the matters in question, while defending his role in the Faurisson affair in terms which cannot be reconciled with his own written remarks at the time—remarks which are directly quoted in my article, though Chomsky's letter ignores these quotations. Since Chomsky repeatedly calls me a liar, it is worth explaining to readers of *The New Criterion* that my article was not published until after I had satisfied the editor about its accuracy by supplying a thick file of photocopies and other documents confirming all potentially contentious points in minute detail.

On the issue of the libel threat (which is far from the most serious of my criticisms of Chomsky), the facts as far as my first-hand knowledge goes are these. My earliest news of a problem with my *Twentieth-Century Culture* entry was a telephone call from Lord Bullock's assistant R. B. Woodings to say that Chomsky had written to

complain about my piece; at that stage Mr. Woodings seemed to regard Chomsky's complaint as more a matter for amusement than one requiring action. At a later date the same man telephoned again to say that Harper & Row had received from Chomsky a threat of libel proceedings, and that Harper & Row stated that this threat must be taken seriously. In the course of this conversation I asked Mr. Woodings to confirm that Chomsky had explicitly threatened to sue; he confirmed this. I immediately followed this up with a letter to Mr. Woodings confirming in writing my understanding that Chomsky had issued an explicit threat to take legal action, and later I discussed the same point in a letter to Lord Bullock; neither man ever made the least suggestion that there was a misunderstanding. (*The New Criterion* already has photocopies of the relevant letters together with memoranda of the telephone conversations.)

Whoever is lying here, it is not me. Furthermore, while Lord Bullock's and Mr. Woodings's roles in this affair strike me as much less than admirable, I cannot believe that they would have deceived me in such a peculiarly roundabout fashion. That leaves Chomsky, or Harper & Row. In view of Chomsky's present comments I am willing to believe that Harper & Row may possibly have been lying to Lord Bullock about the libel threat. If so, that would lower Harper & Row even further in my estimation, but it would not do much to raise my opinion of Chomsky. It would remain true, by his own admission, that Chomsky successfully exerted pressure in order to suppress another person's freedom of expression. As Chomsky has himself emphasized, censorship by law is not the only objectionable kind of censorship.

Lillian Hellman

To the Editors:

I found your article about Lillian Hellman ("The Death and Life of Lillian Hellman," October, 1984) dishonest, unfair, and (to use your own word) malevolent toward her. You accuse her and denounce her without saying where this happened: "She took revenge upon her anti-Stalinist adversaries as soon as she felt rich enough and

powerful enough to do so.” Where and how did she take revenge? When? I have just re-read *Scoundrel Time* and what I particularly like about it is that it is so honest. You say it isn’t honest, but you don’t say where. You use words like “malign” in reference to a fact; you say she “maligned” the editors and writers of *Partisan Review* and *Commentary* but it is a fact that they failed to come to the defense of those questioned by Senator McCarthy. You are doing the maligning—maligning her by twisting the truth into something malignant. I haven’t read Martha Gellhorn’s article lately, concerning Hellman’s adventures during the Spanish Civil War, but it certainly was about very inconsequential things, such as who did or did not stand on the balcony after dinner, nothing more important than that. And that article by Samuel McCracken on the veracity of certain details in “Julia” is about trivial pursuits too, and a waste of everybody’s time. Who cares whether or not there was a morning train or not? While McCracken was at it, why didn’t he check out Anna Karenina’s trains too and prove Tolstoy a total liar? Frankly, I’ll take Hellman’s and Tolstoy’s wonderful writing any day over the weak essays of Mary McCarthy. There isn’t a boring page in Hellman’s three books of memoirs. As for her plays, I have been asking all my friends in the theater for months: how good do you think Lillian Hellman is as a playwright? The answer is always the same: she is the best woman playwright in any language ever. So she is a national, no, an international, treasure. But you can’t even give her that much credit. So I will end this by calling you some of the words you have called her, which fit you better, based on this article: malevolent, poisonous, dishonest, malicious, mendacious, detestable—it all fits what you have written and demeans you, not her.

Charles Turner
New York City

To the Editors:

I protest the atrocious attack on Lillian Hellman in your October issue. The article is biased, bigoted, and ugly in its name-calling. The article is offensive to *The New Criterion*’s readers, and its appearance is belittling to the magazine. It is cer-

tainly not an example of the thoughtful and elegant writing that one has come to expect of Hilton Kramer and for which I have subscribed to *The New Criterion* since its inception.

I look forward to a lead article by a prominent person rebutting what Mr. Kramer has written. You owe this to your readers.

Ethel Berman
Riverdale, NY

Hilton Kramer replies:

Like Marsha Norman, whose words I quoted at the beginning of my article, Charles Turner is clearly “not interested in the degree to which [Lillian Hellman] told the literal truth” in her so-called “memoirs.” He is on the right track, however, in comparing *Scoundrel Time* to a work of fiction—though Tolstoy does not strike one as the most appropriate comparison. As for Hellman’s distinction as a playwright, Mr. Turner seems to have missed the point. It was, as I reported, Marsha Norman and Robert Brustein, Hellman’s admirers in the theater world, who claimed little or nothing for her in this respect.

I am sorry that Ethel Berman seems to have missed the many fulsome tributes devoted to Lillian Hellman at the time of her death. They might have provided some measure of solace. The purpose of my own article, however, was to set the record straight—a record that was largely and often wildly distorted in those many published tributes. Alas, the truth in these matters often is difficult to take, and I do not wonder that Ethel Berman is inclined to wince in the face of it.

Watteau in Washington

To the Editors:

In his stimulating review of the National Gallery’s Watteau exhibition, Jed Perl takes the design department of the Gallery to task for displaying the paintings against dark backgrounds, grey-green, grey-blue and grey-plum. He suggests that this is contrary to historical precedent and that “pale green or cream [would have been] more in line with period taste.”

The popular belief that *dix-huitième* taste leaned toward pale, even pastel, colours seems to

have arisen quite late in the nineteenth century. Evidence of how paintings were hung in eighteenth-century France (or elsewhere) is scanty. But such as there is points in the opposite direction.

That it was impossible to hang paintings on the light-toned (Perl's "cream") panelling picked out with gold on elaborately carved moldings, was a constantly reiterated charge against the rococo style from its inception. A few artists, Watteau and Lancret amongst them, occasionally attempted to pictorialise the surface of the panels by painting on them but the rarity of the practice suggests that it was not greatly admired.

The most complete evidence for the way a painting collection was hung in eighteenth-century Paris are the five miniatures by Louis-Nicolas van Blarenberghe of the various rooms in the Hôtel de Choiseul, where the greatest collection of paintings formed in France in the middle years of the century was hung. Here all the backgrounds are of strong, deep colours: a deep, almost strident magenta, a strong royal blue, and in the *Cabinet à l'Octogone* where the duke's favorite small paintings were hung from floor to ceiling, a dark spinach-green. It was in this last room that the duke chose to hang his only Watteau, *Les Champs Élysées*.

The miniatures are dated 1771, fifty years after Watteau's death, but pictorial evidence suggests that similar backgrounds were customary in Watteau's own day. De Troy's *A Lady showing a Bracelet Miniature to her Suitor* (Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City) dating from about five years after Watteau's death is an instance. This shows a single painting, an unidentifiable work in the manner of Watteau's friend and contemporary, Francis Lemoyne, hanging on the dark green lacquer panelling of the background.

It would, I am sure, be unwise to claim that no painting was ever hung against a light background in eighteenth-century Paris, but even in the latter part of the century when a greater value was put on Perl's "lightness and airiness," collections of paintings were almost always hung against a darkish background.

The practice, so prevalent today, of hanging all sorts of paintings against a very light or even a white background has come into fashion only fairly recently, in response, I think, to the high

key in which so much painting has been pitched since the advent of Impressionism. It has, in my view, done great harm to the understanding of Old Master paintings.

Sir Francis Watson
New York City

Jed Perl replies:

The five miniatures by Louis-Nicolas van Blarenberghe to which Sir Francis Watson refers in his letter decorate a gold box that was made for the Duc de Choiseul. Sir Francis has written a small monograph on this object (*The Choiseul Box*, Oxford University Press, 1963) and both there and in another discussion of the box (in an appendix to A. Kenneth Snowman's *18th Century Gold Boxes of Europe*), he has observed, as he does in his letter, that the Van Blarenberghe miniatures tend to contradict some modern assumptions about eighteenth-century decoration. At least in his letter, however, Sir Francis does not really describe the decor of the Duc de Choiseul's rooms. His descriptions of the colors of the duke's walls leave so much of what is going on in these rooms out of the picture as to create, I think, a false picture. In the two major gallery rooms in the Hôtel de Choiseul—the *Premier Cabinet* and the *Cabinet à l'Octogone*—the pictures were hung on brilliantly colored backgrounds, but these backgrounds (at least one of which was of shimmering damask) in effect took up only perhaps twenty or thirty percent of the wall area. Most of their color was obscured by the paintings, and the colored areas themselves were framed in elaborate wainscoting and moldings of white and gold. Both rooms contained large mirrors, also framed in white and gold; in the *Premier Cabinet* there was a white, gold-decorated ceiling, and in the *Cabinet à l'Octogone*, a white ceiling with a large skylight. The floors were a gleaming, patterned parquet. The overall effect of these rooms was thus a complex assemblage of materials, many of which were light or light-reflecting. These rooms may not be light and airy, but certainly no one could call them dark or heavy; perhaps we could agree on "bright."

However one wants to interpret the atmosphere of the *Premier Cabinet* and the *Cabinet à*

l'Octogone, surely Sir Francis is being disingenuous if he means to say that the Choiseul box offers no evidence that pictures were hung on light walls in the eighteenth century. In several other miniatures on the box—the picture of another *cabinet* and some smaller, corner panels that show vignettes of interiors—the walls are painted a very light blue or an off-white (it is hard to be sure from the reproductions I have seen) and paintings are hung directly on this light background. I realize that this *cabinet* was not one of the duke's picture galleries, and that the pictures in it were not, according to Sir Francis, the duke's most prized. But when we are trying to decide how to hang eighteenth-century works, a room such as this *cabinet*, where (I think it was) Hubert Roberts were hung informally on light grounds, would seem as relevant as the *Premier Cabinet*, where the duke's collection, with its wealth of seventeenth-century pictures, was hung on richly colored panels.

Whatever deductions about eighteenth-century taste can be made from the Choiseul box, I cannot see that the Van Blarenbergh miniatures have anything to do with the installation of the Watteau show at the National Gallery in Washington. The colors used as backgrounds by the duke were rich but not dark; the colors used at the National Gallery most assuredly were dark. And even if the National Gallery had duplicated the colors to be found in the duke's picture galleries, this would not have duplicated the effect of those galleries, where strong color was set against the undulating rhythms of white and gold mouldings and the reflecting surfaces of mirror and parquet. Not the color of the walls, but the ambience of the room as a whole, is what affects our experience of the work of art. I imagine if the Duke could have visited the National Gallery, he would have found the installation of the Watteau show a dreary thing indeed.

But of course I never meant to suggest in my article that the installation of the Watteau show should have been based on historical precedent, just as I did not suggest (as someone who works at the National Gallery said to me on the phone) that the paintings should be exhibited under television lights. Sir Francis speaks of a modern vogue of light walls. But colored walls are also in vogue; just look at all the museum installations

that have used them—and for nineteenth- and twentieth-century pictures, I might add—in the last few years. Most of the paintings that we look at in museums today were never meant to be seen in such surroundings in the first place; the real question is what will most illuminate the work at hand. Even if it were possible to replicate an eighteenth-century picture gallery, who would want to see paintings hung one on top of the other as they were in the Hôtel de Choiseul? (Although in his letter Sir Francis places the duke's Watteau in the *Cabinet à l'Octogone*, he writes elsewhere that the duke moved his pictures around. In an earlier account of the Hôtel de Choiseul he places the Watteau in the *Premier Cabinet*, where he says it hung “a little below the cornice”—in other words, very high up on the wall. These are not the conditions under which I would want to look at a Watteau!) We can never reclaim the experience of a visitor to the Hôtel de Choiseul: not only because the rooms no longer exist, but also because we look and experience with different eyes and minds.

I see no point in Sir Francis's warning about the danger of misunderstanding Old Master paintings. The galleries of the Hôtel de Choiseul, with their multitude of articulated surfaces, created an atmosphere of sculptural richness—a fine counterpoint to Old Master paintings. The flat, dark expanses of wall against which Watteau's pictures were hung at the National Gallery do exactly the opposite—they compromise the sculptural quality of the paintings that ought to be brought to the fore.

Ivy Litvinov

To the Editors:

Any author must be flattered by having twenty-four columns devoted to his work in a prestigious periodical [September 1984], and even grumpy old Ivy Litvinov might have got some pleasure at the thought of Mr. Lipman going to so much trouble (perhaps even expense) to get copies of her early novels and make an extended critique of them which includes the opinion that they are “implicit with life.” I am glad to have drawn his attention to them.

So I do not complain that he clearly disliked

both the book and its subject. They clearly fascinated him in some sort of way. I also leave aside the personal points he tries to score off me—the sneer that only my biographer will be able to explain why I wrote the book at all, the obtuseness of speculating I might not be aware that my carefully chosen title had a psychological as well as a topographical connotation, or the twittering about one or two pedantic points which could be matched in his own piece.

I have, however, two substantial things to say. First, on page eighteen of his piece Mr. Lipman says I provide “not one fact based either on Ivy’s testimony or the recollection of intimates to support [my] claim” that Ivy regarded David Eder as her second father. My whole book makes it clear that I myself was Ivy’s intimate and had full access to the voluminous papers she left behind, which contain many references to her admiration for Eder. On more than one occasion she used to me the very words I have used. The same applies to everything else about her which I assert as a fact, and where I speculate I say so. I therefore very much resent the suggestion that my book is based on speculation, not evidence, since any such suggestion is absolutely false. In saying this I realise that Mr. Lipman seems to have an odd idea about evidence as something which could conceivably support the unknowable, as when he opines that “Doubtless we shall never know just why Ivy Low married Maxim Litvinov.” Could even a sworn statement in a court of law be taken as conclusive evidence on the exact reason why anyone marries anyone?

My other point is this. I do not think any reviewer should get away with contrasting “coherent and disciplined biography” with “a personally written and influenced life and times” to the detriment of the latter. Consider Boswell. Indeed I do not see that it is possible to write

otherwise than personally, or subject to influence. Mr. Lipman certainly does not. Bias, and acceptance of influence to distort fact or presentation is another matter, and I trust that Mr. Lipman is not suggesting this. My inclusion of the horrible story of Rose Cohen in Ivy’s own words, to which Mr. Lipman draws approving attention, should be a sufficient indication of where I stand in these matters. Indeed I had hoped that it would have got more publicity than it did in the many favourable notices the book has had. So I am grateful to Mr. Lipman at least for that.

John Carswell
Hampstead, England

Samuel Lipman replies:

Mr. Carswell’s lengthy letter has (in his own words) “two substantial things to say”: that I accuse him of providing no facts based on Ivy Litvinov’s own testimony or the recollections of intimates, and that I find it better to do a “coherent and disciplined biography” rather than a “personally written and influenced life and times.” The problem, of course, is that Mr. Carswell doesn’t seem to realize that to “assert as a fact” (again his own words) is not quite the same thing as to *demonstrate* one. The usual way of attempting demonstration is by citation of material at least in principle open to independent verification. In the case of his description of the quasi-filial relation he believes obtained between Ivy Litvinov and David Eder, he might have quoted material from her papers to substantiate his assertion; he might have, but he didn’t. It is this tendency to rely on personal assertion rather than disciplined demonstration which renders his book less than the intrinsic interest of his subject—as shown by her two early novels, to which he gives scant attention—deserved.



JILLIAN DENBY, *Pink & White Peonies*, 1984. Oil on canvas, 50"x36".

TATISTCHEFF
TATISTCHEFF

50 WEST 57 ST. • NEW YORK 10019 • (212) 664-0907

Martha Mayer Erlebacher

Recent Paintings

January 5–January 30



Anger, 1984, oil on canvas, 64 x 103½"

Robert Schoelkopf Gallery 50 W 57 NY 10019

3 NEW PAINTINGS

BY **Peter Solow**

November 27—January 12

Touchstone Gallery 118 East 64 Street NYC

Gail Levin

in conjunction with

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, Inc.

announces the preparation of

Marsden Hartley

A Catalogue Raisonné

Please forward pertinent information to

Gail Levin

c/o Salander-O'Reilly Galleries

22 East 80 Street New York 10021

Tel: (212) 879-6606

STEPHEN PACE *January 5 to 30*



*New
Paintings*

*White Bikini,
Mauve Spread,
1984.
Oil on canvas,
34 x 46 inches.*

AM SACHS *980 Madison Ave, New York (212) 734-7795*

Richard Mock

January 8-February 2

Judy Rifka

January 8-February 2

Brooke Alexander, Inc.

20 West 57th Street New York 10019 Telephone 212/757-3721

**GEORGE
MCNEIL**

**New Paintings
January 1985**

**The GRUENEBAUM GALLERY
38 E 57 Street
New York, New York 10022
212-838-8245**

ACTION/PRECISION

PAINTINGS FROM THE 1950's AND 1980's

NORMAN BLUHM

MICHAEL GOLDBERG

GRACE HARTIGAN

AL HELD

ALFRED LESLIE

JOAN MITCHELL

WASHBURN GALLERY

WORKS FROM THE 1950's • 42 E 57

WORKS FROM THE 1980's • 113 GREENE

The New Criterion
850 Seventh Avenue
Suite 503
New York NY 10019

Second Class Postage
Paid at New York, NY
and at additional
Mailing Offices

1/86

NY 10027